

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

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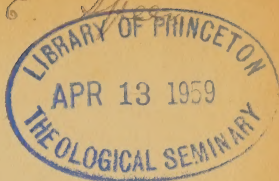


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The kingdom of God

Robert E. Hays



THE

KINGDOM OF GOD

BY

✓
HECTOR BETTEX

Translated from the French

BY

JOHN CHURCHILL

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

WHEN I first read this work of Mr Bettex, it struck me as one singularly clear and concise, neither meagre in consideration of the important subject of which it treats, nor too full of detail for the generality of believers. Differing as it does in this respect from nearly all English works on prophecy with which I am acquainted, it seemed to me that if it could appear in our own language, it might be of much service to many Christians in our land. There are those who are quite prepared to give attention to a work which goes beyond a mere outline of prophetic truth, and yet does not repel by elaborate details and observations such as can be duly weighed only by persons of intellect and leisure.

There is really far less difficulty about prophecy than many seem to imagine. Teachers do not content themselves with following their proper function—that of expounding the written Word—

thereby raising difficulties which have deterred the children of God generally from the study of prophecy. How great is the loss thus endured by the Church may be gathered from these words alone of Rev. i, 3, "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein, for the time is at hand." Nor can there be a true knowledge of the Lord apart from acquaintance with the prophetic scriptures, for in Rev. xix, 10, we read "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

It is, then, through a belief in the value of this book as a help to simple, Bible-loving Christians, that I have ventured, with the permission of the son of its late author, to present it to them in English.

I refrain from offering any apologies, otherwise much needed, for defects in the style of the translation. I claim appreciation of the matter, rather than of the manner, of the work. All credit for the former belongs, of course, to the author.

As a rule, I have followed the original very closely. I do not hold myself responsible for all the author's opinions, though I am bound to say that he says very little which I should even modify, much less contradict. In a few, very

few, cases I have inserted a note of my own. To such my initials are added.

It will be noticed that I have been governed by no rigid rule in quoting passages of Scripture. While it seemed to me advisable to follow generally the Authorised Version, I have not scrupled to depart therefrom when by so doing it seemed to me that the meaning of the inspired writer would be more clearly manifested. The author quotes, of course, in French, and it is sometimes better to translate his quotations than to transcribe our own authorised version.

To gratify a not unnatural desire on the part of my readers, I add the following particulars as to the author of this work.

Hector Bettex, a native of Switzerland was born in the Protestant canton of Vaud in the year 1807. At the age of nineteen, while studying theology at Lausanne, he was during a dangerous illness, from the effects of which he suffered through life, converted to God. To this end the Holy Spirit used the earnest entreaties of a fellow student, who also read to him the 53rd Chapter of Isaiah, a portion of Scripture to which his first saving knowledge of God may be attributed. Thus blessed, he gave himself, to the joy of his pious mother, entirely to the ministry of the

Gospel, for some years labouring in his native canton as assistant-pastor and pastor of various parishes.

After a time the great need of labourers in France decided Mr Bettex to enter the service of the *Comité d'Évangélisation* in Paris, and preach the Gospel to Roman Catholics. At St Etienne, near Lyons, he laboured for seven years among the working classes, and the Lord gave many tokens of blessing. Impaired health now compelled him to go to the south of France. At Aix, at Cannes, and afterwards at Nice, he continued to serve the Lord.

Returning to Switzerland in 1863, Mr Bettex was there also blessed to many souls in the preaching of the gospel and in the edification of God's people. This was effected by much journeying and by unceasing pastoral visitation. Frequently lecturing on prophecy, many desired to possess in more permanent form the substance of what he had taught. To meet their wishes, he wrote this present work, which appeared shortly before the close of his earthly career.

Mr Bettex does not appear to have written much. Other works by him are *Le Siècle présent et le Siècle à venir* and *Quelques Mots sur le Rassemblement des Enfants de Dieu*.

On the 24th of April, 1879, Mr. Bettex fell asleep at Vevey, where he is held in affectionate remembrance by many saints. To him may be truly applied these words, "They that make [see Heb.] wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

WIMBLEDON ; *July*, 1883.

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I

The Kingdom of God

WILL NOT BE ESTABLISHED EXCEPT BY THE
GLORIOUS AND PERSONAL COMING OF
THE LORD JESUS



THE Gospel marches on to the conquest of the world. Yet a few more missionaries, a few more sacrifices, a few more efforts, and the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Even Israel, losing its distinctive character, will be converted to Christianity. Such will be the Church in its last and complete perfection, the Church of the future, the kingdom of God. Such is the thought of many. I grieve to overthrow such great expectations. But why should I grieve? It is always profitable to change even our brightest dreams for the immutable and eternal truths of the word of God. I say then decidedly, and beyond doubt, that the hope of seeing the kingdom of God established by the preaching of the Gospel before the coming of

the Lord is but a delusion and a chimera, and that such thoughts are a positive contradiction to the teaching of this Word. The Gospel of grace which we preach in the present day has no other aim, and will have no other result than the gathering together of the Church. This Church, completed by the gathering in of the last of its members, will be raised to meet its Lord. Then, the salt being taken from the earth, evil will abound till the Lord comes again with his saints to destroy the wicked one and all those who corrupt the earth, and to establish His glorious reign. Thus, the kingdom of God will be established, not by the preaching of the Gospel, but by the coming in person of the Lord Jesus.

This is what we would now set forth by calling to mind the essential points of this kingdom.

I

All agree in acknowledging that one essential sign of the kingdom of God is that the earth be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Shall this, then, be accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel? Let us judge by the words of the Lord (Matt. xxiv, 37-39): "As it was in the days of Noe so shall it be at the coming of the Son of Man.

“For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be.”

Before I had any enlightened intelligence on the subject of prophecy, when I heard the conversion of the world by the preaching of the Gospel spoken of as being before the coming of the Lord, I thought to myself: This cannot be, for it is written, “As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man,” and in the days of the flood the world was very far from being converted.

Indeed, the declaration of the Lord is so positive and so clear that it should suffice to settle our thoughts on this subject. But this is not all.

What does the Word tell us shall be the lives of men in these last times (2 Tim. iii, 1-5, 13): “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God;

having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. . . . But evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived."

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. iii, 3, 4). This is no picture of a converted world.

What, then, is the distinctive sign of the last times? It is Antichrist, "that man of sin, that son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thes. ii, 3, 4). According to the word of John, "There are already many antichrists, and by this we know that it is the last time" (1 John ii, 18).

When the Lord comes to establish His kingdom, what will He do? He will "fill the places with the dead bodies, He will wound the heads over many countries, for the LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on my right hand until I make thine enemies Thy footstool."

In the second Psalm God says to his Son, "Ask of me and I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shall break

them with a rod of iron ; Thou shall break them in pieces like a potter's vessel."

When the Lord comes from heaven seated on a white horse, and followed by His armies, to take possession of His kingdom, what does He do? He smites the nations with a sharp two-edged sword which comes out of His mouth, and will break them in pieces, as the vessels of a potter, with a rod of iron. Then continues the prophet (Rev. xix, 17, &c.), "I saw an angel standing in the sun, who cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God ; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great." If, then, the world is converted, these are his own disciples whom the Lord smites with His two-edged sword, and gives for food to the fowls of the air! But no ; the prophet continues and says, "I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war with Him who sat on the horse, and with His army." Such is the world at the end of this dispensation. It is joined with that great blasphemer, Antichrist, or the beast, against Him who is seated on the horse,

and against his army. Surely, then, it has not been already converted by the preaching of the Gospel.

Far be it from us by anything we say here to lessen by any means the divine efficacy of the Gospel. No one is more convinced than we are that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe, to the Jew as to the Greek, to the savage as to the civilised man, to the woman who is a sinner as to the honest man, but on the one condition that they believe; and God, who undoubtedly knows better than we those who believe, tells us that *all* have not this faith.

We have already heard the Lord tell us that before His coming men will eat, drink, &c., and will not believe. He also tells us "when the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii, 8).

II

Moreover, that which constitutes the reign of God according to the Word is not only the earth covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. There are also certain providential dispensations which are not under the jurisdiction of the Gospel; for instance, the re-establishment of Israel as a nation.

The present time is, so far as Israel is con-

cerned, the "many days" during which they are to be "without a king and without a prince and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim, after which the children of Israel are to repent and return to the Lord their God and to David their king" (Hos. iii, 4, 5).

That Israel reunited under David their king, should find again their sacrifices, their ephod or worship, presumes a national re-establishment in the country which God gave to their fathers, a re-establishment which the prophets announce in many places. Thus, for example, Isaiah, in describing the establishing of the kingdom of God in the eleventh chapter, says, "And it shall come to pass in that day that the LORD shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people which shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elan, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea, and He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."

We have the same teaching in that wondrous

vision of the dry bones in the prophet Ezekiel (xxxvii), which is known to any one who has read the Bible through a single time. One has often heard of this vision as being an individual and corporeal resurrection of the saints of Israel. What has contributed to this thought is no doubt that word of God, "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel, and ye shall know that I am the LORD when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land." Now, the dwelling-place of the risen saints is not earth, but heaven. These graves, so many times spoken of here, are the countries of the Gentiles, among which Israel is still at the present day dispersed, and which in a sense are to her a grave, since she cannot in them have either king, or governor, or sacrifice, or worship, and since she is in a word, nationally and religiously, dead. Besides, the resurrection of the body will not be carried out gradually and by stages as is here represented; but this gradual and progressive raising up does very truly depict the raising up of Israel as a nation, and we may perhaps be present at the first stage of this raising up, for in this day there is a sound and a movement among

the dry bones of the house of Israel, and one sees them approaching one towards the other.

Thus, the vision of the dry bones shows us the re-establishment or resurrection of Israel as a nation. That which further proves it is the parable of the two sticks, which continues and completes it: "Son of Man, take thee one stick and write upon it, For Judah and for the children of Israel his companions; then take another stick and write upon it, For Joseph the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel his companions, and join them one to another into one stick, and they shall become one in thine hand, and when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee saying, Wilt thou not show us what thou meanest by these? say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all, and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all. Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions. But I will save them out of all their dwelling-places wherein they have

sinned, and will cleanse them, so shall they be My people, and I will be their God. And David My servant shall be king over them, and they all shall have one shepherd; they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt, and they shall dwell therein, even they and their children and their children's children for ever, and My servant David shall be their prince for ever. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlasting covenant with them, and I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them, yea I will be their God and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore."

Can the Gospel do that? Evidently not. One might almost say that it even does the contrary; at least, in some respects. In fact, when an Israelite is preached to, and so led to believe on the Lord Jesus, he loses himself, if one may so say, in the Church, the body of Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but Christ is all and in all. Thus, he exchanges his Israelitish and

earthly hopes for the spiritual and heavenly hopes of the Church. He is one member more of the body of Christ, one citizen less for the earthly Jerusalem.

In the prophetic scenes which we have called to mind the question is quite other than that of the fruits of the preaching of the Gospel, which must be to-day to the children of Israel as to all the rest of the human race. It concerns the establishment of Israel as a nation in the land of their fathers, with their king, their temple, their worship, in a word with all their national privileges.

III

And this is not all. When the Lord shall have restored His people, and made a new covenant with them, He will for their sakes also renew the earthly creation. This creation is in the present day suffering under the weight of the curse which the sin of man brought upon it in the beginning. Cursed is the ground for thy sake, thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, until thou return unto the dust of the earth from which thou wast taken," (Gen. iii. 17, &c.)

Scripture itself shows us the result of this curse when it tells us, "The creature was made subject to vanity not willingly, but by reason of Him Who

hath subjected the same in hope . . . it is in the bondage of corruption . . . the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now. And not only they, but ourselves also who have the firstfruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body" (Rom. 8. 18. &c.) But it will be otherwise when the true kingdom of God shall have come, for this kingdom is precisely the time of refreshing for which the creation is groaning, it is that glorious liberty of the children of God in which all the creation hopes to participate (Rom. viii, 18.) Oh! yes, things will be very different, not only for the believing ones of the Church, which will then be in Heaven, but also for those who will occupy the lower place in that kingdom, Israel and the nations on the earth. "And the inhabitant shall not say I am sick" (Isa. xxxiii, 24,). "There shall be no more thence," saith the Lord, in speaking of that time, "an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days, for the child shall die an hundred years old, but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them, and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them; they shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat. For, as the days of a tree are the days of My people, and mine

elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (Isa. lxxv. 20, &c). Does it not seem from this that the elect, at least in Israel, will not die during the millennial reign, since the wicked who die at a hundred years old will still be young, and the days of the saints shall be as the days of the trees? And we know that trees live a thousand years and more.

The earth, too, especially the land of Israel, will be freed from the curse pronounced upon her because of the sins of her inhabitants, for she will appear as a garden of Eden. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose" (Isa. xxxv, 1). "The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree, and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off" (Isa. lv, 12, 13). "And it shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim" (Joel iii, 18).

Even the animals will be partakers of this

renewing of the creation, for God says: "In that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven." "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them, and the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den" (Hosea ii, 18; Isa. xi, 6-8).

Once more, can the preaching of the Gospel do this? Is it amongst its attributes to make man live a thousand years and to change the character and the nature of animals?*

* It does not appear to me that this passage in Isaiah should be understood in a literal sense. The oppressors of Israel are often spoken of under the similitude of ravenous beasts (Jer. iv, 7; v, 6, and many other scriptures); while, if verses 6—8 are to be read as referring literally to the wolf, the lamb, &c., the conclusion would seem to be almost inevitable that verses 4 and 5 are also literal. But no one supposes that when the Lord appears in glory and judgment a rod will literally issue from His mouth, or that His loins and reins will be literally girded.—[J. C.]

IV

It is precisely this display of the power of God with regard to His earthly people, first to judge and then to bless them, which will lead the nations of the earth to the obedience of faith in the God of Abraham and of David. We have already heard God say by the mouth of His prophet Ezekiel (xxxvii, 28) : "And the Heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore." "The days of fasting shall be changed for Judah into days of joy and gladness. Thus saith the LORD, it shall come to pass that there shall come people and the inhabitants of many cities. And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of Hosts. I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of Hosts in Jerusalem and to pray before the LORD. Thus saith the LORD of Hosts : in those days it shall come to pass that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you : for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. viii, 19-23). "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the

mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills ; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths ; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem " (Isa. ii, 2, 3).

The conversion of the nations generally, with their princes and their kings, is what is to follow, in some respects, at least, in consequence of Israel's conversion, according to what God has said to the millennial Zion (Isa. lx, 10, &c.) : " The sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister under thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually, they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought." Thus the word will be fulfilled which says : " If the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness ? If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead ? " (Rom. xi, 12-15)

V

Lastly, the Word shows us, as an essential and characteristic sign of the kingdom of God, the imprisonment of Satan bound in the abyss, and the glorifying of the saints, who will be reigning with their Lord. "After these things," John tells us (Rev. xx, 1, &c.), "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled. . . . And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them, and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection. On such

the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years."

In the anticipatory vision of the glory of His reign, which the Lord gave us at His transfiguration, there were not only present saints with their earthly bodies, as James, Peter, and John. There was also Moses, who had ^{passed thro'} ~~not seen~~ death, and Elijah, who had been changed.*

The kingdom of God is that "regeneration"

* The attentive and serious reader of the Word will doubtless have noticed that in each one of the three gospels which gives an account of the transfiguration, the recital is immediately preceded by these words of the Lord to His disciples: "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom" (Mat. xvi, 28); or, "The kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix, 1); or, "The kingdom of God" (Luke ix, 27). By this remarkable and thrice repeated similarity does not the Holy Spirit evidently teach us that we must in the transfiguration look for the fulfilment of the promise made by the Lord to a few of His disciples, that they should not die before they had seen Him in the glory of His kingdom? The apostle Peter, one of the happy witnesses of this scene, so himself declares to us when writing to his scattered brethren: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of His majesty" (2 Pet. i, 16).

Thus, to Peter the scene of the Holy Mount was *the power and coming*, or the coming in power, of his Lord, Whose majesty he had then seen. We are then fully authorised to see, in the transfiguration of the Lord, a type, a figure of His coming and His glorious reign.

of which the Lord spoke to His disciples, saying, "Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt. xix, 28). It is the time when the saints will judge the world (1 Cor. vi, 2). It is in contrast to the present evil generation that the Lord speaks of the generation to come, saying, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, cannot die any more, for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection" (Luke xx, 36). The kingdom of God is that "dispensation of the fulness of times in which the Lord will gather together in one all things, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him" (Eph. i, 10). It is that time when "every knee will bow before Him, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and when every tongue will confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii, 10, 11). In heaven all the glorified saints, on earth Israel and the converted nations.

We ask once more, and for the last time, Can the preaching of the Gospel do these things? Undoubtedly, the Gospel received into the heart by faith triumphs over Satan and the

world, because it gives to the believer the advantage of the full victory which the Lord Jesus obtained over His enemies. But could the Gospel ever hurl Satan into the bottomless pit for a thousand years after binding him with chains? The Gospel changes the heart of him who receives it, transforms him in his hopes, his thoughts, his affections, into the image and the likeness of Him Who has redeemed him; but can the Gospel transform the bodies of the living saints, and take from the dust those who have already returned to it, and place both these and those on thrones of glory where they will judge the world? The reply is so evident that it seems absurd even to ask the question. Nevertheless, these things must happen in the kingdom of God; the risen and changed saints must reign with their Lord.

The kingdom of God, then, such at least as is understood in the Word, cannot be brought about by the preaching of the Gospel alone; but this same Word declares to us in the most positive manner that this reign will be established by the glorious and personal coming of the Lord Jesus.

VI

Every time the prophets present to our view a complete picture of the kingdom of God, the leading feature in the picture is the personal coming of the Lord to destroy the wicked one and those who corrupt the earth. In the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, for instance, where we have Israel and Judah inhabiting in peace the land of their fathers; the earth covered with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, creation renewed, the wolf lying down with the lamb, the leopard with the kid; that is to say, the most essential signs of the kingdom of God; what is the sign which will precede every other? It is that the "Branch out of the roots of Jesse will smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips will He slay the wicked one," a declaration which agrees perfectly with that which Paul says of the coming of the Lord to destroy the son of perdition, "whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. ii, 8).

The prophet Zechariah describes to us in the last chapter of his revelations a glorious day when "Jerusalem rebuilt in her place shall be inhabited in safety, none making her afraid. In that day living waters shall go out from

Jerusalem, half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea, in summer and in winter shall it be." In that day the nations will go up to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles, and "Holiness to the LORD" shall be written not only on the mitre of the high priest, but even "on the bells of the horses, and the LORD shall be King over the whole earth, in that day there shall be one LORD, and His name one." Who can after this doubt that this day is the day of the Lord, the millennial day, the kingdom of God? Well, what is it that ushers in this glorious day? It is the Lord Himself, who coming out of His place, will fight against the nations which surround Jerusalem. It is the Lord whose "feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem on the east side. Then the LORD my God shall come and all the saints with Him" (Zech. xiv, 5).

Who can the LORD be here, if not the Lord Jesus who went up into heaven from this same Mount of Olives, and of whom the angels said to the disciples who witnessed this scene, "He shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven" (Acts i, 11).

Lastly, if we return to those scenes with which we have just been occupied, the imprisonment of Satan, and the glorifying of the saints, and we

seek for that which prepares for them and brings them in, we shall see that it is still the personal and glorious coming of the Lord. John sees heaven opened, and a white horse, on which is seated One who is "Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns, and He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, and out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations, and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. His enemies assembled together against Him are destroyed by the two-edged sword which proceeds out of His mouth, and the fowls of heaven are filled with their flesh" (Rev. xix).

Who can doubt that this "Faithful and True" One, who judges and fights in righteousness is the Lord Jesus who comes followed by His heavenly saints to destroy His enemies and to establish His kingdom?

Thus, all the accounts of the kingdom of God, looked at from different points of view, agree in telling us that this kingdom will not be established except by the coming in person and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The apostle Peter teaches us the same thing, and in a most emphatic manner; when offering for the last time the kingdom to the children of Israel in the name of Christ risen he says to them, "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, and the times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and He shall send Jesus Christ, Whom the heavens must receive until the times of the restitution of all things spoken by the prophets" (Acts iii, 19).

No, the reign of God, as the Word speaks of it, will not be established by the preaching of the Gospel; but when the Lord shall have been seen in His glory and power destroying the wicked one and those who corrupted the earth, then the unbelief of the world will come to an end, then those that remain of the nations smitten by the judgments will believe and be converted to the Lord.

When Satan, that liar and murderer from the beginning, that great seducer of our first parents and of all their descendants, when Satan shall have been cast into the bottomless pit that he

may no longer deceive the nations, it will be seen that these will abandon their selfish, perverse, and sanguinary policy which they have learnt from him, and will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. When the venomous and harmful influence of this old serpent shall have given place to the good influence of the glorified saints; when an Abel, an Enoch, a Paul, and a John, when all the saints indeed who have been perfected shall be the happy servants to minister the pity of God toward the world; when, themselves nourished in the paradise of God by the fruits of the tree of life, they will use the leaves for the healing of the nations, who can say what will be the blissful state of the earth? These will be the times of refreshing, for which the whole creation now groans. The ladder of Jacob will then have its foot on the earth and its summit in the heavens, every knee on earth and in heaven will bow to the Lord Jesus, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Then will indeed be the kingdom or the reign of God, and then will be said with the angels, that which is now but a prophetic hymn or a pious wish: "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will toward men" (Luke ii, 14).

VII

But some may say: To see things in this light is the very way to discourage those who labour in the Gospel. That which appears to us far more discouraging is to entertain hopes constantly rising up, and as constantly belied by facts, of a world converted and renewed by the preaching of the Gospel. Where can we find a converted nation? We could enumerate countries formerly covered with Christian churches, such as North Africa, Anatolia, Syria, almost the whole of Turkey, where the Koran now reigns. Others might be named where Christianity has been preached from the first centuries of the Christian era, and where it is established as the religion of the state, but mixed with so much error and superstition, that the Gospel in its purity is a novelty, and where it must be preached in the present day in the face of as many difficulties as among Turks and Pagans.

So it is where, for the moment, missionaries thought they had made Christian communities. They soon had to find they were mistaken. These infant peoples, dazzled for the moment, and charmed by the benefits of the civilisation the missionaries brought, received the Gospel as a part of that civilisation; but when in a little time

they had to give proof of that self-denial to which the Gospel calls us, or to suffer persecution for the name of the Lord, it then became evident that, among the greater number at least, seed had fallen on to stony ground, where it had no root. Tahiti, Madagascar, and many other missionary fields afford proof of this.

If a Christian country could be found, must it not surely be ours? Is there any corner of the globe which has been the object of more marvellous protection on God's part, and which has been more evangelised than ours? Well, in traversing our fields, give ear to the cry of the labourer and the vine dresser, and say whether it is one of thankfulness to God who, having given us His Son, still fills our mouths daily with His benefits? When the Lord's day comes round, just follow those crowds which the excursion train and the pleasure boat carry to their profane amusements, and count as they return the number who stagger in their drink, and say if this is the Sunday of a believing people. Yet once more, where can we find a Christian people?

Where is that peace in the hope of which we were cradled a few decades ago? Where are those peace societies which then proclaimed so loudly that people were too civilised, too much penetrated by the spirit of a human brotherhood, for war henceforth to be possible? Forced

to *silence* by the terrible disappointments which facts have given them, ashamed of their powerlessness in the face of the peoples who from one end of Europe to the other strive to make of every man a soldier, and to provide for themselves engines of destruction every day more powerful, it would seem that these societies think now only of making their existence forgotten.

For eighteen hundred years the Gospel has been preached in the world, and never perhaps has peace been farther from reigning ; and one cannot mention one single people truly converted, not even the very smallest. Ah ! let us acknowledge it at last, that this hope of a world converted and at peace solely by the preaching of the Gospel is a hope which man has forged for himself in his own wisdom and self-will, and which has not the smallest foundation in the word of God. That is why this hope is but a delusion and a deception.

The Scripture, it is true, often tells us of a time of universal peace, during which the nations will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. But this will be after the Lord has executed judgment upon the nations and rebuked many peoples (Is. ii, 4). That is why before this these very nations must "beat their ploughshares into swords and their pruning-hooks into spears," as one sees in the

present day. They must "go up into the valley of Jehoshaphat that the LORD may wake up their mighty men and judge all the heathen round about" (Joel iii, 9-12). For it is He Who "makes wars to cease. It is He who breaks their bow and cuts their spear in sunder, and burns their chariot with fire, and who says, Be still and know that I am God" (Ps. xlv, 9, 10). Before "every one sits under his vine and under his fig tree" (Mic. iv, 4), there must be "wars and rumours of wars, nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, there must be famines, pestilence, and earthquakes, men's hearts failing them for fear at things which are coming on the earth" (Matt. xxiv ; Luke xxi).

It is true Scripture tells us also of a time when "all the ends of the earth will turn to the LORD, and all families of the nations will worship before him," of a time indeed when "the earth will be covered with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Ps. xxii, 28 ; Isa. xi, 9). But before that, iniquity must increase until, having come to the full, and being personified in him whom the Word calls "the man of sin, the son of perdition," it will call down the judgment of the Lord, who will come accompanied by the thousands of his saints to destroy the wicked one and those who corrupt the earth.

Then, and not till then, shall all the ends of the

earth be converted and turn to the Lord, and it will be covered with the knowledge of Him. This state of things is not, then, the fruit of the preaching of the Gospel, but the fruit of the judgment executed by the Lord at His coming in glory, as we have already seen.

But, it may be said, if the preaching of the Gospel has not for its end and object the conversion of the nations, and thus to lead on to the reign of God, what is its object, and why was it commanded by the Lord when He said, "Preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi, 15, 16) ?

We reply : God's object in giving commandment for the preaching of the Gospel to every creature is that He might gather together from among all nations the church, that bride, that body of Christ which is called to reign with Him when He shall have taken possession of His kingdom. This is what the apostle James most positively tells us when, in speaking of the work of the first missionaries, he says : " God at the first did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts xv, 14). Mark this well. God *at the first* did visit the nations not to convert them *en masse*, with their kings and their governors, as He will do later

on, but "to take out a people for His name." Just as the pious Israelite before the harvest chose out from his field the first ripe ears to form a sheaf which he might offer to God in His temple, so does God in the present day, in the field of this world, call out of every nation, tribe, people, and language some souls to make of them a church, that sheaf of the firstfruits, which will soon be presented in the heavenly sanctuary, for "He has begotten us of His own free will by the Word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures" (James i, 18). Then, when this sheaf of the firstfruits shall have been presented at the heavenly portal, the hour will not be far off when a voice will come forth from the temple, and will cry to the angel of the harvest, "Thrust in thy sickle and reap, for the harvest of the earth is ripe" (Rev. xiv, 15). Then He "whose fan is in His hand will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather His wheat into the garner; but burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iii, 12). This is the judgment of the end of the age, followed by the glorious reign of the Lord and His saints, during which time "every knee in heaven and on earth will bow to the Lord." Then, and then only, "will the earth be covered with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. xi, 9).

But, because the present day is not the time

for the world's conversion, we are not for a moment to suppose that there is no need to preach the Gospel, for the world is the field from which God will in the present day take out the sheaf of the heavenly firstfruits. We have before us, if I may make use of the comparison, a table covered with sand, mingled with particles of iron which our eyes cannot distinguish. What must we do if we would get possession of those particles of iron which are mixed with the sand? We must take a magnet, and we must move it up and down with care on every part of the table, not omitting a single part. You understand: the table is the world, in which the elect are mixed up with the reprobate in such a manner that we cannot distinguish the one from the other. The magnet is the Gospel, which we must preach to every creature, so that it may call out and make manifest the elect.

This is what every faithful and intelligent servant must do who has on his heart the salvation of souls and the glory of his Master. Leaving to God the secret of election, of which He has reserved to Himself the knowledge, he preaches the Gospel to every person he meets on his way. Certainly Paul did not draw his encouragement and his strength from the thought that the world would be converted by the preaching of the Gospel, he who tells us "That all men

have not faith " (2 Th. iii, 2), that " wicked men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived " (2 Tim. iii, 13) ; he who gives us as a characteristic sign of the end of this dispensation " " the apostasy, and the man of sin, the son of perdition " (2 Thess., ii). However, all will agree we may well wish that we had many evangelists and missionaries like Paul.

To evangelise them with courage and blessing, we must not expect the conversion of the world in this dispensation. On the contrary, we are persuaded that those who work with this hope will always be tempted to lean more or less on the arm of flesh ; if not upon the civil power, at any rate on the influence of man, his wisdom, or his eloquence. To attract the world, they will be tempted to make the Gospel fit into the thoughts and tastes of the world, and the result will be crowds of people turning to Christianity, rather than souls truly and thoroughly converted.

Those who hope to bring about the conversion of the world by Gospel work, will never insist that those who have been saved must come outside the camp to Christ, into the path of separation and of the cross ; but they will leave them in the world, waiting for the conversion of the world itself, that they may be in it (what a double confusion !) as the leaven to leaven the whole lump.

Finally, those who are expecting the conversion of the world by the preaching of the Gospel will certainly neglect and put on one side the coming of the Lord to take His own out of the world before judging it, for these two things exclude each other. If it be the conversion of the world by preaching the Gospel, which is our aim, our future hope, it is not the coming of the Lord to take out His own from the midst of a world plunged in evil. Thus they have an incomplete gospel, a gospel divested of one of its most beautiful results, the daily waiting for the Lord.

Besides, they deprive themselves of one of the greatest incentives to those who preach the Gospel. Where, indeed, shall we find a more powerful incentive to work while it is called to-day, to sow in the morning, and in the evening not to withhold the hand, to preach in season and out of season? Where, I say, shall we find a more powerful incentive than in this thought: soon—to-morrow, perhaps—the time of God's long suffering and perfect grace will give place to the time of His judgments!

We have seen that Paul certainly did not expect the conversion of the world in this dispensation, but he did expect the coming of the Lord to take His Church to Himself. If then we are waiting, not for the Lord, but for the conversion of the world, we are in manifest opposition to

that man of God, we are neglecting that which was his consolation, his hope, and his strength, and are seeking courage and help in that which to him was merely delusion and fancy.

This brings us to a general consideration of that which rules the whole subject, and which will also be the end of it. Do we believe, yes or no, in the divine inspiration and perfection of the Word of God? If we do believe it, we must receive it just as it is; I was going to say, even if it be discouraging to us, but I hasten to add that this is impossible. No, it is not possible that the word of God which bids us preach the Gospel to every creature could be of a nature to discourage that work. It is not possible that for encouragement in the service of a God of truth we should have to lean on delusions and lies. That would be to accuse God of inconsistency and contradiction. Oh! that our one great absorbing occupation may be to search that which is written, that we may bring into conformity thereto our hopes and our actions, remembering that "there is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord" (Prov. xxi, 30).

II

The Kingdom of God

IN THE PRESENT DISPENSATION AS IN THE
SEVEN PARABLES OF MATTHEW XIII



It has been alleged that we have not taken into account the spiritual kingdom mentioned in the Gospels, especially in the parables of Matthew. There is no better way of replying to this accusation than by inquiring of Matthew, whom we may well call the evangelist of the kingdom, first, for the great features of the history of this kingdom, then for the essential characteristics of its present phase.

Such then shall be the subject and the plan of the following pages.

I

We have seen that the kingdom foretold by the prophets was a kingdom of earthly glory, of

which Israel would be the centre, and which would gradually spread thence to the ends of the earth, having for king Jesus, the Son of David, sitting upon the throne of His Father. We will not go back again to that. If any one still has any doubts upon the subject we will content ourselves by quoting to him Jer. xxiii, 5, &c ; Dan. vii, 13, 14, 27, and Luke i, 32.

It is true that the Lord Jesus said "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii, 36, 37), but if we read attentively the account in the Gospel from which this passage is quoted, we shall see that at that particular time the Lord was replying to Pilate, who had asked Him if He were a king. "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." We should see that the Lord not only said "My kingdom is not of this world," but "*now* is My kingdom not from hence." Could He say otherwise when that house of Jacob, over which He was to reign for ever, denied Him, saying, "We have no king but Cæsar," and demanded with loud cries that He should be crucified. But if the Lord had intended to say that His kingdom was not, and never could be, of this world, He would have openly contradicted the prophetic declarations which were brought to our mind a little while ago. He would Him-

self be contradicted by those voices from heaven which will one day cry, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xi, 15).

But is it not written that the kingdom of God shall not come with observation, but is within us? No. The Lord said to the Jews, "The kingdom of God *cometh* not with observation;" and, indeed, when the Lord Jesus was there, not breaking the bruised reed nor quenching the smoking flax, but offering to all free grace, the kingdom of God did not come with observation. "But behold," continues the Lord, "it is in the midst of you;" for this is the correct translation from the original. How could Jesus say to the incredulous rulers of Israel, "The kingdom of God is *within* you?" but He could say "in the midst of you," because the king was there, offering them His kingdom and all its blessings. As He was rejected when He came the first time in grace to offer His kingdom, He must come again the second time to establish it with power and great glory, as He says Himself a few lines further on, "For as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day" (Luke xvii, 20, 24).

Why, if this be the case, did Jesus vanish out

of their sight when the multitude wanted to make Him their king? Because He would not be made a king by an ignorant crowd, seized with a passing fleshly enthusiasm, because they had been miraculously fed. He would be recognised by the eye of faith as the Messiah prophesied of to Israel by all the prophets, recognised as He was by Nathaniel, that Israelite in whom was no guile, who at his first interview with the Lord knew Him as the Son of God, the king of Israel. If every Israelite had been a Nathaniel the kingdom of God could have been established, but not otherwise.

One often hears it said that Israel is deceived in looking for a glorious earthly kingdom, but it is not so. The nation has good ground for expecting a glorious kingdom, for all the prophets have foretold it. But the establishment of this kingdom in the midst of Israel was conditional upon the conversion of that people, as the prophets foretold in different ways:—"Be converted, then, and you shall discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not" (Mal. iii, 18).

That is what Israel did not understand. They wished to enjoy the glories of the kingdom without passing through the humiliation of repentance, and without conversion. This is why John the

Baptist came in the desert of Judea, preaching and saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii, 1, 2). The Lord Jesus Himself began His ministry with the same words, and to those who received not His testimony He said, "Notwithstanding be ye sure of this that the kingdom of God has come nigh unto you" (Matt. xii, 28; Luke x, 11).

When He sent forth His disciples to preach, He commanded them to say "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. x).

But very soon, His testimony being no better received than that of John, He turns to the towns wherein the greater number of His miracles had been wrought, and menaces them with the judgments of God because they were not converted :—"Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in thee, they had believed long ago and repented in sackcloth and ashes. Therefore, I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you" (Matt. xi, 22).

A little later the Lord, after having openly announced His rejection and death, says as to the end of the unbelieving generation of Israel, "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return

into my house from whence I came out, and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there, and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation," or unto this race, the unbelieving race of Israel (Matt. xii, 43).

What then is that wicked spirit, if not the spirit of idolatry, often in the Word compared to fornication and adultery, and which, moreover, entangled Israel in the impurities and abominations of the heathen. Indeed, one very remarkable thing is that this idolatrous spirit seems to have left the people of Israel from the time of the captivity of Babylon. The prophets who came after did not speak of it. John the Baptist and the Lord Himself reprove Israel for formalism, pride, and unbelief, but never for idolatry. Since their dispersion among the nations, and in the midst of all heathen idolatries, the Jews have invariably retained their faith in the oneness and in the spirituality of God. The unclean spirit has gone forth into the waste and dark places of the earth among the heathen, lowered to the level of the brute creation, and has made them worship beasts, and four-footed things, and reptiles, and trees, and idols so hideous as to make one's very

blood run cold. But even then he can find no rest, and at the set time, no doubt, when he sees Israel re-established in their own country, he will again desire to return to his ancient home. He will find it swept and empty, emptied of its God, as the Lord says in His farewell to Jerusalem, "Your habitation is left unto you desolate." "I do not curse your Jesus," said a Rabbi of one of the large towns in France, "as many of my co-religionists do who are still slaves to their old prejudices. I look upon Him as on Moses and the prophets, as a man superior to His contemporaries, and who, to work with greater power among them, wished to persuade them that He was sent by God and that He could perform miracles." See how philosophy and reason work together to make of Israel an empty house, and to sweep away, with all the old prejudices, all that yet remained of faith in Moses and the prophets.

But this house emptied and swept must also be garnished and what with? With all that modern industry aided by the gold of the richest bankers of the world can procure, of articles of use, comfort, and magnificence, of all, indeed, which can conduce to the lust of the eye, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. How, then, could the unclean spirit not desire to take up his abode in this house? He will return to

it with seven other spirits more impure than himself, and the last condition of that man—that is to say, of unbelieving Israel—is worse than the first. In their former idolatries the Israelites always kept up the idea of a divinity over them, however obscured that divinity might be ; but in their last revolt, uplifting themselves with their chief against all that is called God, or worshipped, they will blaspheme their God and King, and will persecute to the death those who refuse to join themselves to them or to take the mark of the beast. This will be evil at its height, but also judgment will be at the door. “Wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together” (Matt. xxiv, 28).

It is after this prophetic glance at the terrible end of the unbelieving race of Israel that the Lord gives forth the seven parables in which He describes to us “the mysteries of the kingdom of Heaven,” and from that moment, let us mark it well, He never again represents the kingdom as offered to Israel, but, on the contrary, as being taken from them on account of their unbelief, and not to be given to them again until the end of the age, at the return of the Lord in glory to destroy the wicked one.

This is what we see in the parable of the nobleman who came to reign over his citizens, but they hated him, and sent messengers to him,

saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. Then he goes away and takes possession of a kingdom in a country afar off, returning again in power and saying, "Bring forth these people who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before my eyes" (Luke xix, 12-27).

This is what we see in the parable of the husbandmen, the conclusion of which is so definite. "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. xxi, 33).

Lastly, this is the meaning of those touching farewells of the Lord to His much loved Jerusalem, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii, 37-39).

II

Let us come now to the seven parables of the "mysteries of the kingdom," parables which up

to the present we have only mentioned in passing, just to mark their place in the summing up of the history of the kingdom. We have not forgotten that the Lord, when He uttered them, had already declared to the unbelieving generation its sad end. He saw the kingdom which He had offered to Israel rejected with all its blessings, and He saw the Church take her place. With that divine look which sees things which are not yet, as if they were, He sees this Church, corrupted by contact with the world, become Christendom. He sees this Christendom set the seal to its confusion by considering itself to be the kingdom, and applying to itself the temporal and national promises made to Israel. We think, then, this is precisely that state of things, that Christendom which the Lord here calls "the kingdom of heaven and the mysteries of the kingdom."

As in the epistles to the seven Churches of Asia, the Lord regards as the Church all that which takes the name, and judges it by its own word; so here the Lord calls Kingdom of Heaven all that which takes that place or calls itself by the name. He shows us the confusion and disorder which have crept in, a disorder which, so far as man is concerned, is without remedy, and which the Lord alone can heal when He comes in His glory to destroy the wicked one and to esta-

blish the true kingdom in which the righteous will shine as the sun.*

Let us now pass to the special study of each one of these seven parables contained in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and see if the result of this study confirm, or otherwise, the general idea which we here give.

* There are, perhaps, many other interesting connections which might be remarked between the seven parables which we are studying and the seven churches of the Apocalypse. Thus, by the parable of the sower, which presents to us the introduction of evil into the kingdom in the fact that of four scatterings of seed only one brings fruit to perfection, we are led to think of the Church of Ephesus, where decline commences with the loss of first love.

Is there not a striking connection between the great tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air lodge, and the Church of Pergamos (or *tower*), which dwells where Satan's seat is, and which has those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes?

Is there not especially a well-marked relation between the parable of the leaven, which a woman has hid in three measures of meal, and Thyatira, which suffers that woman Jezebel, who calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce God's servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols?

Lastly, does not the net drawn to shore remind us of Laodicea, or the Church of the judgment of the people (for such is the signification of the name)?

We express these thoughts not as positive utterances, but rather that we may offer them to our brethren as questions or subjects for study.

THE SOWER

It is not only when the Lord Jesus, the heavenly sower, sows in the country and the hills of Judea the seeds of truth that this parable has its fulfilment. It is fulfilled in the present day wherever the Word of God is preached. Considered from this point of view, this parable contains useful and precious instruction as to the manner in which we are to hear and keep the Word; but, however precious these instructions may be, we must not tarry over them, as they are not part of our present plan, which is to gather from the seven parables a complete picture (as the number seven indicates) of the kingdom of God in the present day, or, in other words, of Christianity in its different aspects. Thus considered, the parable of the sower is like an introduction to the gallery of pictures which all the parables together offer to us. That which we must bear in mind to start with is that even in this introduction we have already the mixture of good and evil. Indeed, it is indisputably an evil that out of four portions of seed scattered on the earth there is only one which brings forth good fruit.

THE TARES

This parable takes us one step farther in the history of the corruption of the kingdom, for if

it was already an evil that, out of four portions of seed only one brought forth good fruit, it was a still greater evil that, even where the good seed fell, the devil came, while men slept, and sowed tares.

Therefore, this is what this second parable teaches us. "The tares," said the Lord, "are the children of the wicked one." The work of the enemy here shown us is then the introduction of the world into the Church, making Christendom such as we see it in the present day, and let us mark well that this confusion, once introduced by the cunning of the enemy and the slumbering of man, can never again be cast out till the Lord comes to bring in a remedy by judgment. When the servants of the householder, men of good intentions but blind zeal, come and say unto Him, "Wilt thou that we go and gather up the tares?" "No," is the reply, "let both grow together until the harvest." "The harvest," says the Lord, "is the end of the *age*," (not of the world, as some versions incorrectly put it). It is the end of this evil age of which Satan is the prince, the end of the evil age brought about by the appearing of the Lord in judgment. It is at this time that the Son of Man will send His angels, who will cast out of His kingdom all abominations and those who work iniquity, and will cast them into the lake

of fire, and then the righteous will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

There are Christians who are astonished and scandalised when they hear it said that the kingdom of heaven, as represented by the Lord in His parables, is a corrupt kingdom, a kingdom of confusion. It seems to them that to speak so is a want of reverence for the Word. Well, we would bring them face to face with this parable, and ask them: Is it we who say that, even where the good seed is fallen and has begun to grow, the devil has sown tares? Is it we who say that these tares, once introduced into the field, can never again be exterminated but by the awful judgments of the Lord at His coming? Do we say this, or does the Word of God say it? Is it possible that a field sown with tares, and which can only be cleansed from them by the final judgment of the Lord, can be a thing exclusively good? Is that the kingdom of heaven, such as the Lord Jesus introduced at first on the earth? This brings us to a remark introductory and general as to the two parables which follow.

THE GRAIN OF MUSTARD SEED BECOME A GREAT TREE—AND THE LEAVEN

If the object of these parables is to show us, as some believe, the world converted by the

preaching of the Gospel, the Lord would be manifestly contradicting His own testimony, for in the parable of the tares He has shown us that the field once sown with bad seed can never be purged from it, except at the judgment at the end of the age, and in the two following parables He would be showing us the Gospel covering the earth with its shadow, and permeating the world with its good influence. This interpretation is, therefore, quite inadmissible, and one which a closer study of these parables will show us to be so.

The great tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air build their nests, does not come before us here for the first time. We have already seen it in the fourth chapter of Daniel where it symbolises the pomp and worldly grandeur of Nebuchadnezzar, his dynasty, his capital, that great Babylon in which he glorifies himself, thus in the end drawing upon himself the judgment of God. Is it, therefore, likely that the figure chosen by the Holy Spirit to depict the superb grandeur of the kingdoms of this world, would be the figure chosen by the Lord to represent that which is so opposite to it, the humble and peaceable triumphs of the Gospel? And these birds building their nests in the branches of the great tree are, no doubt, in the eyes of those who see in the tree the Gospel, the children

of God rejoicing under its shadow and being nourished by its fruits ! But in the parable of the sower the Lord Himself tells us that the birds which catch away the seed are the devil. Can any believe that the figure, used in the first parable to represent the devil working in opposition to the Gospel, can represent in the third the redeemed rejoicing in the sweet fruits of that Gospel ? No ! the parable of the grain of mustard seed becoming a great tree, in the branches of which the birds of the air make their nests, is an admirable type of the increasing grandeur of the Church and its corruption through contact with the world. The Church, at its commencement small and poor, was despised by the wise and powerful ones of the earth, but she did not trouble herself about this. Christ was her wisdom, her strength, her treasure, and her glory. She wanted nothing from this world but to pass through it as a stranger, like Israel, who, on the way to Canaan, asked leave of Edom to pass through her country without drinking water from her wells or eating the fruit of her trees. But soon, when the Church began to grow feeble in faith, and consequently feeble in her hopes and affections toward heaven, she turned herself toward the world, and asked of it ease and wealth and honour. She became an establishment, a power in the world, she even aspired to rule over

all other powers, as we see plainly enough in the triple crown of the Bishop of Rome. The compact offered by Satan and refused by the Lord, "I will give Thee all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," has in a sense been accepted by the Church. It is this aggrandisement of the Church in the world, Satan's domain, that the parable of the great tree is intended to show us, and the internal corruption of this Church is especially shown in the leaven. See then how those who would represent the leaven as the Gospel, filling the world, and renewing it by its good influence, are going against all Bible truth. The flour, produce of the wheat which is the good seed, cannot be used to show us anything essentially bad like the world. Leaven, on the contrary, is always without exception used in the scripture to describe something evil, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy," said the Lord Jesus to His disciples.

"Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump," said Paul to the Corinthians, who had among them the adulterer. The same apostle said the same thing to the Galatians in speaking of their false teachers, who taught them justification by the works of the law and told them "if they were not circumcised they could not be saved" (Gal. v, 9). "Let us keep the feast,"

said the same apostle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. v, 8), "not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." We all know with what care the Jews before the Feast of the Passover cleared their houses of every morsel of leavened bread by which they would be defiled. How can we after that admit that the leaven, constantly used as a type of evil, could be chosen by the Lord as a type of anything good, such as the Gospel? Let us notice too that the woman "having taken a little leaven *hid* it in three measures of meal. Such is the literal translation. But when we desire to fill the world with the Gospel, we do not hide it.

What then does the parable of the leaven represent? We believe it represents the corruption which pervades the Church, in measure and in proportion to her worldly aggrandisement. For instance, false teachers, and the false doctrine of salvation by works, the means of grace put into the place of grace itself, producing formalism, hypocrisy, Pharisaism, and every kind of superstitious and vain practice. In fact, worldliness and all the lusts of the natural unconverted man, called in the Word "the old leaven of malice and wickedness," as opposed to the new nature or "the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Do we wish to see in the mirror of history

some characteristic signs of this worldly grandeur of the Church ?

Let us glance at the middle ages, that golden age of the union of Church and State, and let us enter the Council of Constance convened in that town by the Emperor Sigismund in 1414. There we see the Emperor sitting in all the splendour of imperial dignity, with his wife Barbe at his side. Ambassadors from almost every Christian power vie with each other in their emulation to exalt the majesty of their different sovereigns, by the pomp and luxury with which they all surround themselves. We count 130 great vassals of the empire, 346 archbishops or bishops, 564 abbots or heads of orders. Four popes appeared in that assembly, in person or by their representatives, to dispute there the right to the tiara. Scarcely a week passes without such a sight as the entry into Constance of some great person, or that of one of those processions which sometimes last for two or three days, and in which is displayed all the pomp and magnificence of Romish worship. The chronicles also report 100,000 as the number of strangers which filled Constance, and amongst them mention fifty jewellers who came and set up in business for the time of the Council, not to speak of all those who were in the town before, 500 fiddlers or players of musical instruments, 700 courtesans. Even brigands came and

established themselves round about the town, to tax the lords and the rich prelates who came and went in connection with the Council.

Is not that truly the great tree in the branches of which the birds of the air build their nests? For, we ask, what demon is there of luxury, avarice, pride, or ambition which does not build its nests in its branches? What beast is there which cannot find food beneath its shelter, from the popes and the princes, who came now and again to dispute for crowns, down to the fiddlers and women of evil fame, who sought to ply their different trades? And, if we place this picture which has just passed before our eyes, side by side with that of the first days of the Church of Jesus Christ, must we not believe that it is the grain of mustard seed, the smallest among seeds, which has become the great tree, among the branches of which the birds of the air build their nests?

All that is passed away, it is said, and will never be seen again. Possibly so, but this has been seen during these ages, and forms an important part of the history of Christendom. Why should it not find its place in the prophetic picture which the Lord traced of this Christendom? Even to-day, how are the works of religion surrounded with a pomp and splendour entirely of the world, just to draw or hold the

multitude! What high days of worldliness and profanity there are, which man seeks to justify to his conscience by throwing into the balance some religious act, perhaps displaying the Bible which there figures, somewhat like the holy vessels of the temple at Jerusalem in the midst of the feasts of Babylon, or like the harps of Judah which were hung mute and silent on the willows by the waters. Shall we sing the Lord's song in this strange land? Shall we make the Bible heard in these thronging multitudes? For it is to these great political and industrial gatherings, the immense fêtes which often follow, that one turns in the present day. These are the ecumenical councils of our time, or at least that which takes the place of them. But when, pursuing this course, men exalt themselves in the work of their own hands, till they say, like the monarch of old, "Is not this that great Babylon which I have built by my great power and wisdom?" then will it be said, "Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, let the birds of the air flee from its branches and the beasts of the field from its shadow."

But blessed be God, the roots of that tree are to remain in the earth and shoot forth again under the blessing of God. When seven times of judgment had passed over the proud king his reason returned to him, his kingdom was given

back to him, and he gave glory to the God of Heaven. So, when the nations shall have passed under judgment, the remnant will be converted to the Lord, and the earth will be filled with the knowledge of his glory.

THE TREASURE—AND THE PEARL

Many see in these parables the soul which, converted to Christ, strips itself of everything to be clothed with Him. But the soul does not, by so doing, purchase salvation, and above all it does not buy the field, which is the world, to get the treasure, which is salvation. This will always remain under this system of interpretation an inexplicable difficulty. No, it is not we who have sold all to purchase the field to possess the treasure which is hidden in it. It is the Lord Jesus Himself who from all eternity has seen the Church hidden in the field of the world, and Who, to possess Himself of it, left His heavenly glory, made Himself of no reputation, took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that He might save man who was lost. Thus Jesus is, from one point of view, the Saviour of the world, as He is called by John the Baptist “The Lamb of God

who taketh away the sin of the world ” (John i, 29), and by the apostle John, “The propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world ” (1 John ii, 2). Paul tells us that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them ” (2 Cor. 5, 19). In fact, the blood of Christ is precious enough to blot out the sins of every living man, if all would have recourse to it; but few in number are those who do so. They are those whom the Father has given to the Son, and for whom the Son prays to the Father asking that where He is, there they may be also (John xvii). They are those who form the treasure hid in the field, and for whose sake the Lord buys the field. How, indeed, can they be otherwise than dear to the Lord, His most precious treasure, since they are the fruit of the travail of His soul, the reward of His sufferings. But they are a hidden treasure. Is not the Church the mystery hid from ages and from generations, and which is only manifested when Israel frustrates God’s designs regarding them? (Eph. iii, 4, 5; Col. i, 26). The Church even in the present day is still a mystery, a hidden treasure to many. The world knows a Church as Catholic, Protestant, or Anglican, &c., because these churches, having allied themselves with the world, have become establishments of the world.

The world knows its own. But the true Church—who is there of the world who knows it? We need not wonder that the world does not recognise it when we think of its weakness and division. Yet it must have its place in the picture the Lord traces here of the kingdom and of its different aspects in our dispensation; otherwise, the picture would be incomplete, for, if the Church is not the kingdom, she forms a part of it. She is, indeed, the living part, for the sake of which the Lord keeps the field or the world. It is in this Church that we realise that kingdom which is “righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (Rom. xiv, 17).

The pearl, on the other hand, what can it represent, if not Israel? As the pearl lies at the bottom of the water, hidden by a rough covering till it is taken out of it to be sold to the merchant, so Israel is hidden, buried still in the present day in the midst of the waters “which are the peoples nations and tongues” of Rev. xvii, 15. It is there deprived of all real life, without king, without priest, without prophet; but, as the Lord Jesus has purchased the world by His blood, so has He purchased Israel. It is indeed properly and especially to this people that that magnificent promise is given, “Fear thou not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest

through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall any flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. xliii, 2). The nations, among whom Israel has been scattered for eighteen centuries, have neither absorbed nor destroyed them. The fire of the great tribulation will not be able to extinguish them. Many of Israel's saints, it is true, will seal their testimony with their blood, but they will go to swell in the heavens that great multitude, clothed in white robes with palms of victory in their hands, and cry with a loud voice, "Salvation to our God Who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev. vii, 10). When at last the Lord by His appearing in glory shall have destroyed the wicked one and those who have joined themselves to him, the saints destined to be the holy seed will come out of the hidden place as the three Hebrew children from the fiery furnace, as Daniel from the lion's den, without leaving a hair of their heads behind. Then, under the blessing of God, "the little one will become a thousand and a small one a strong nation" (Isa. lx, 27). The Lord will cause "Jacob to take root and Israel to blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. xxvii, 6). This will be the pearl which, after having been taken from the

depths of the sea, will shine in all its brightness in the casket of the merchantman.

Yes, in the midst of the disorder and confusion which the malice of the devil and the ignorance and sinfulness of man have filled the world, there are two things upon which the Lord looks with satisfaction and love, and which will soon shine with a heavenly light: one in heaven, the Church; the other on the earth, Israel. If even in the present day in her state of scattering and weakness the Church "makes known to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God," what will it be when the Lord "presents it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, holy and without blemish" (Eph. iii, 10; v, 27) ! If Israel, in her marvellous preservation in the midst of the nations among which her people are dispersed, make known to all the faithfulness of God, what will it be when it is said, "Awake, awake, put on thy strength O Zion, Put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city, for henceforth there shall no more come in to thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust, arise and sit down, O Jerusalem. Loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion" (Isa. lii, 1, 2) !

THE NET

The Lord, in the last of these parables, appears to have in view the directing of our minds to the essential and ruling feature of that which in this dispensation is called the *kingdom of Heaven*, namely, the intermingling and the confounding together of good and evil. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast in the sea, and gathered of every kind." If we consider, for example, that fundamental institution of Christendom, national churches, with their baptism of newly-born infants, their admission of all, at a given age, to the Lord's Supper, their union with the state which rules and directs them, frequently even in spiritual concerns, what confusion do we witness? and how could we better compare it than to a net which, cast into the sea of the peoples, gathers things both good and bad? How many bad fish in the innumerable meshes of this net, what slime, what filth! How many formalists who put the means of grace in the place of grace itself, and who, while having a name to live, are really dead! How many enemies of the cross of Christ, who mind only earthly things, whose belly is their god, and who glory even in their shame! How many profane and impious scoffers walking after their own lusts and saying, "Where is the promise of His

coming"! But, also, how many good fish in this net! How many who have found life and peace in that which yet remains of truth in the midst of so much confusion! How many who walk humbly and without display in fellowship with their Lord, often glorifying Him more, in spite of their ignorance of many precious truths, than some who have much more light!

Is it not often found that schools established to defend the truth and to make labourers capable of spreading it in the world have become a means of substituting science for faith, theology for the gospel, and introducing into the Church many human imaginations and traditions? On the other hand, who would deny that in them many have found opportunity of acquiring useful knowledge, which they have subsequently used in the service of the truth, even as Moses employed in the service of God and of His people the knowledge he had gained in Egypt?

Missions are, it cannot be denied, excellent in themselves, commanded by the Lord when He said to His disciples, "Go, preach the Gospel to every creature!" But have they always been undertaken and conducted in the Spirit of the Lord and of His first disciples, who rested upon no arm of flesh, and "for His name's sake went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles" (John iii, 7)? Missions have been the means of

saving millions of souls, who have thus been led to Jesus, and we ought to bless God that a missionary spirit has revived in our time. But, on the other hand, have not missions often spread among the heathen a Gospel more or less mixed with error, have they not in particular carried to the ends of the earth the names and sects of our old Christianity? Thus, at all times and in all places, the mixture of truth and error, of good and evil! And this must be till the coming of the Lord, as He Himself incontestably teaches at the conclusion of this parable, which is the same as the conclusion of the parable of the tares. When the net was full "they drew it to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the age. The angels shall come forth, and shall sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

The kingdom described in our parables is not then the kingdom of righteousness and peace announced by the prophets to Israel, and offered by the Lord Himself at the commencement of His ministry, for that kingdom must not be one of confusion and disorder, with offences and workers of iniquity. Nor is it the kingdom of which Paul speaks, which is *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost*, for that kingdom

is not realised in the *field which is the world*, but only in the heart of the believer, who is the habitation, the temple of the Holy Ghost. That which in our parables the Lord calls the *Kingdom of Heaven* is that condition of things which has arisen through Israel's rejection of the glorious and blessed kingdom which was offered to it; that is, the Church, but the Church marred by its being confounded with the world; it is Christendom, that Christendom which calls itself in its ignorance and presumption the Kingdom of God. The Lord sees and judges it according to the place which it takes and the name which it gives itself.

See then—thing strange at first sight and seemingly contradictory!—why this Kingdom of Heaven comes to a close in the judgment of the end of the age. It must pass through this judgment that it may be purged of things which offend, and of workers of iniquity who now make of it a kingdom of confusion, and it must again become that which it ought always to have been, that which was in the intention of God, a kingdom in which *the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*. The Lord, in His tender solicitude, desired to describe to us this phase of disorder and confusion in His kingdom in order that we, in passing through it

might not be stumbled, but might take courage while we remember that it has been predicted, as He said on another occasion to His disciples : “ These things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them ” (John xvi, 4).

Furthermore, in the midst of the dark picture of the present confusion, the Lord has been careful to let pass before our eyes the brighter points concerning the Church and Israel, that we may be encouraged by the sweet perspective, even as the tired traveller is encouraged by the ray of sunshine which, piercing the dark mists of a winter's day, causes him to discern in the distance the hospitable roof under which he will rest from all his fatigue.

III

In view of these facts and these instructions, what are the children of God to do who are still scattered in the midst of Christendom ?

Should they endeavour to heal this condition of things by propping up and whitewashing the establishments which still give shelter to them ? This question amounts almost to that of the servant's, “ Wilt thou that we go and gather up the tares ? ” a question to which the householder so distinctly replies, “ Nay, lest while ye gather

up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest, &c.” The reformation or the purification of Christendom is then impossible. All who have attempted it have failed. Inquisitors of every category have, as we have already said, torn up more wheat than tares. Reformers who desired to reform Christendom by the preaching of the Word have been the instruments of salvation to many souls, for that will always take place when that Word is preached with faithfulness; but does not Christendom remain, as before, a field where tares grow among the wheat, a mass altogether leavened with the leaven of worldliness, unbelief, and false doctrine? Of this the Lord sought to warn us, that we might be hindered from exhausting our strength in barren and fruitless efforts to heal that which cannot be healed. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Rev. xxii, 11, 12).

Ought our endeavour, then, to be to overthrow the establishments of Christendom which surround us? No! in spite of the confusion

which reigns in it, God, in His long-suffering and infinite wisdom, acts in it still in grace. It is not for us to anticipate the times, the knowledge and ordering of which He has reserved to Himself. In making such attempt we should run great risk of entangling ourselves in occupations and in political and social strifes with which we have no concern. To the kings who have committed fornication with the whore does it belong to make her desolate, to "eat her flesh, and burn her with fire" (Rev. xvii, 16). Their affair, let us leave it to them. As for us, let us hold the place which alone befits us, that of obedient servants whose eyes look unto the hand of their Master, and whose ears are open to His voice, that we may know His will and do it. God, then, has not given to His servants the task of healing Babylon or overthrowing her, but it is their part simply to come out of her: "We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, let us go every one into his own country." "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Jer. li, 9; Rev. xviii, 4).

What said the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost to his fellow-countrymen after having preached Christ to them? "Save yourselves from this untoward generation;" and all those

who gladly received his word "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers" (Acts ii, 40—42).

Christendom, then, is incapable, no less than Israel and Babylon, of being healed. Had we no other proofs than the parables, they would suffice, since they exhibit to us its close in the judgment at the end of the age, which alone will remove from it the things which offend and the workers of iniquity. Besides, is it not written, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. vi, 14—18).

Upon these declarations of Scripture we base our belief that the children of God who are yet

scattered in the midst of the modern Babylon of Christendom are called to come out of it, to worship God in spirit and in truth with those who believe. We are not ignorant of the opposition and the objections which those will meet who wish to follow this path.

Do you not see, will be said to them, that you are thus entering upon a sectarian path, and one directly opposed to this word : "Let both grow together until the harvest" ? We reply : Doubtless, both must be allowed to grow together until the harvest, the tares and the wheat, the children of the devil and the children of God ; but where is it that they must be allowed to grow ? That is the question. In the Church ? By no means. The Lord says no such thing ; but in the *field*, which is the *world* ; or at least in that portion of the field in which the good seed has been sown. If in the parable the Lord had recommended us to let the tares and the wheat grow together in the Church, He would be plainly contradicted by the declarations of His apostles, which we have just called to mind. He would be contradicted by Paul in his word to Titus : "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition reject" (Tit. iii, 10) ; and to the Corinthians, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. v, 13). But there is not here the shadow of a contradiction ;

for the Lord is speaking of *the world*, the apostles speak of *the Church*. The Lord forbids the plucking up of the tares from the field, that is to say, taking the wicked person out of the world, as was desired by Peter and John, calling fire from heaven upon the Samaritans ; as have done also the inquisitors of all times, and even the reformers, when they consented to the punishment of heretics. The apostles, on their part, exhort us to withdraw from the midst of the unbelieving multitudes, that we may worship God in spirit with His children ; to *put away the wicked person* when he appears in the midst of the assemblies of the faithful, in order to preserve among them the holiness which belongs to the house of God. The Apostle Paul in particular, very far from contradicting the teaching of the Lord in the parable, confirms it, on the contrary, in the most positive manner, when he says : “ What have I to do to judge them that are *without* ? Do not ye judge them that are *within* ? But them that are *without* God judgeth. Therefore put away *from among yourselves* that wicked person ” (1 Cor. v, 12, 13). Thus, he expressly distinguishes the *without*, which we are not called upon to judge, but which we should leave to the Lord’s judgment, that is to say, the world or the field out of which we must not gather the tares, from the *within*,

that is to say, the Church, the assembly of believers, from which we are called upon to *put away* the wicked person.

Those who wish to walk in these paths are accused of doing sectarian work, and one opposed to the Word. The accusation is well-founded, we must remember, if Christ be not taken as the only foundation, the centre alone of the assembly of believers; in other words, if there be required of those who desire fellowship in such assembly anything else than the doctrine of Christ and the life of Christ. Those who do so cannot entirely clear themselves from the reproach of being a sect, since they reject true and living members of Christ, members whom Christ acknowledges as His. Such cannot altogether clear themselves from the reproach of placing themselves in opposition to the Scripture, since no one ever has been, or will be, able to point out in the Scriptures any other exclusion than that of the heretic and the wicked person.

To say that we must, in order to preserve unity, submit ourselves to the decisions—*whatever they may be*—arrived at on this point by respectable men and by numerous assemblies, is to attribute to men and to assemblies of men that infallibility which belongs alone to God and His word;* it is to forget that unity yields priority

* Attempt is, it is true, made to soften this pretension of

to truth, so that all unity which rests not upon truth is a false unity, a unity of man, a sectarian unity.

But if Christ be truly the only basis upon which we gather together; if, in consequence, whoever brings the doctrine of Christ and honours Him by his life has a rightful place in the assembly; if, moreover, the Word of God be acknowledged in it as the only infallible appeal, the supreme judge of all controversies, there is no ground for calling that a sect; it is, on the contrary, the meeting of the children of God

infallibility by saying: "No, we are not infallible; but not the less is it necessary to submit to the decisions of our assemblies, just as submission is given to the decisions of magistrates and civil tribunals, though they are not infallible. Thus, the submission due from us to certain teachers and assemblies has for its model the passive and blind submission which we owe to magistrates in purely mundane matters! But does the Word say so? Not only is this not the case, but it says positively the contrary: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so" (Luke xxii, 25, 26). "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren" (Matt. xxiii, 8).

Moreover, every Christian knows well that if even a magistrate commands a thing contrary to the Word of God, he must be answered in the word of the Apostles: "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts iv, 19). Shall it be otherwise in the Church of God?

upon a base at once the broadest and incontestably the most scriptural.

Besides, it is not alone in view even of their gathering together that the children of God, still scattered throughout the Christianised world, are called to come out therefrom in order to unite with those who believe as they do ; it is also in view of worship which (such as God demands) can be offered to Him in the meeting only of His children. It is after having said to the Hebrews : " Let us go forth unto Him without the camp," that the apostle adds : " By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name " (Heb. xiii, 13, 15). It is in the house formed of living stones, all resting upon the Living Stone disallowed of men, but chosen of God, that are offered up those " spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ ; " and only those are qualified to offer these sacrifices who have believed, for only such are " a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people, that they should show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into His marvellous light " (1 Pet. ii, 5, 9). Indeed, how is it possible to worship in Spirit and in truth with those who, strangers to the Spirit, are not walking in the truth ? How can we break the bread which is the communion

of the body of Christ, and drink the cup which is the communion of His blood, with those who trust not in that expiatory death? How, finally, put thanksgivings and songs of deliverance into the mouths of those who are still slaves of the devil and the world? Is not this aiding them to slumber in their false security, while we ought to rouse them by crying: "Be converted and believe in the Lord Jesus, that you may receive the forgiveness of your sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit." But, among those who have experienced this conversion, and who have received this faith, is realised at the table of the Lord, while waiting for His return, true worship, such as is comprised in this word: "Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, amen!" (Rev. i, 5, 6).

Oh! if the children of God had better understanding of their calling in this respect, and if they realised it, what blessing for them, what testimony to the world!

III

The Coming of the Lord

FIRST TO RECEIVE HIS CHURCH, THEN TO
ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM



I

A CERTAIN nobleman went into a far country, said the Lord Jesus, to take possession of a kingdom, but with the intention to return. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us." When he was returned, he said: "Bring those enemies who desired not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me" (Luke xix, 12-27).

We know that this nobleman is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the King rejected by Israel and the world, but Who will soon come again to take possession of His Kingdom, in spite of all His enemies, and to inflict a signal vengeance upon them; but we also know that this King, rejected by the world, before leaving it, affianced Himself to a bride to whom He gave the promise

that He would soon return and take her away for the celebration of the nuptials, in order that she might share His triumph and His reign, as Paul said to the Corinthians : " I am jealous over you with godly jealousy, for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ " (2 Cor. xi, 2) ; and, as the same apostle says to the Ephesians : " Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word ; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish " (Eph. v, 25-27).

The Lord, near the time of His departure from His disciples, said to them : " Let not your heart be troubled : ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself ; that where I am ye may be also " (John xiv, 1—3). It is the Bridegroom Who on His departure informs His bride that He is not leaving her no more to return, but that He will soon come again to take her to Himself in order that thenceforth she may be ever with Him.

When, on the contrary, the Lord replies to His judge who asks Him if He be truly the Son of God, the answer is: "Thou hast said, and I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mat. xxvi, 64).

The scene of the rapture of the Church by her Head, to be thenceforward for ever with Him, we have in the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians iv, 13, &c. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep will God through Jesus bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not anticipate them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

The scene of the return of the Lord with His Church to judge the world, and to establish in

it His kingdom of righteousness and peace, is described to us in Rev. xix, 11, &c.

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns; and He had a name written that no man knew but He Himself. And He was clothed in a vesture dipped in blood, and His name is called the Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations: and He shall rule them with a rod of iron: and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. And He hath on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”

II

If now we compare together these two scenes we can but be struck with the essential differences which characterise them.

These two scenes manifest, the one and the other, the majestic power of the Lord; but in the first this power is exercised in favour of His redeemed, whom He raises if dead, whom He

changes if alive, and whom He bears all together away to Himself, in the clouds which are given to them for a glorious chariot. Thus they see the earth, this abode of mourning and of tears, disappear beneath their feet, and the heavenly mansions open before them. Who can express, who can even understand, their joy and their happiness when there they enter conducted by the Lord, amid the sound of the Alleluias of their glorious inhabitants! It is indeed the bride who in triumph enters the nuptial abode, supported upon the arm of the bridegroom. In the second of these scenes the power of the Lord is exercised in judgment and in the destruction of His enemies whose flesh he gives to the birds of the air. In vain do they say: Mountains, fall upon us, and hills, cover us. In vain do they seek a refuge in the caves and dens of the earth. Nothing can conceal them from the searching look of the Lord, nothing preserve them from the sharp sword which proceeds from His mouth. The time of grace is passed, the hour of judgment is come. The saints themselves, who have one after the other been the witnesses of that grace, are now the armies of the Lord, mounted, like Himself, upon white horses. It is, indeed, the rejected King who comes to take vengeance upon His enemies, and a vengeance as terrible as His patience has been great.

That which especially characterises these two scenes of the Lord's coming is that in the first of these acts the Lord, after having with His mighty voice raised and changed His own, calls them to Himself "in the clouds," "in the air." Then He does not come Himself to the earth. In the second of these acts, on the contrary, the Lord issues from heaven accompanied by all His saints, and comes with them "to judge the world" to which He descends. For then it is that "His feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east," and that "in the Valley of Jehoshaphat He sits to judge" all the assembled nations (Zech. xiv, 4; Joel iii, 12). Then it is that "the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, and shall sit upon the throne of His glory, and all nations shall be gathered before Him." . . . "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD, and all the nations shall be gathered unto it" (Matt. xxv, 31, 32; Jer. iii, 17).

We are even disposed to think that the rapture of the Church will remain invisible to the world. This appears to us to follow from those words which, shortly before His death, the Lord addressed to His disciples, "Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more, but ye see Me; because I live ye shall live also" (John xiv, 19).

Doubtless these words had a first fulfilment

during the days which followed the resurrection of the Saviour, for at that time He several times caused Himself to be seen by His disciples ; never by the world. But did His disciples then see their Master in His heavenly glory ? Did they then truly and entirely live through His life ? No ; for they yet dwelt in this weak and mortal body, in which we are unable to support the splendour of the glory of heavenly bodies. John himself, the beloved disciple, fell as one dead at the feet of his Lord, when He showed Himself in Patmos with a few rays of this glory. It is only when the Lord shall come to take away His Church that, that which is mortal in us being absorbed by the life of Christ, we shall see Him as He is, being ourselves transformed into His image and likeness, and that we shall indeed live by His life. The words of the Lord had but a first and imperfect fulfilment after His resurrection. It is also very remarkable that the disciples who did not at first understand these words, *Yet a little while*, when they had subsequently received the Holy Spirit, themselves made of it application to the period of time which was yet to elapse before the Lord's return, "Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. x, 37). The types of the rapture of the Church seem also to teach us that this rapture will not be visible to the world.

No one saw the first of these men of God ascend to heaven, for it is said of him, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him (Heb. xi, 5). We know that Elijah in his ascent to heaven was seen only by Elisha, his disciple and friend. We have also the instance of Elisha's servant to teach us that eyes of flesh cannot see heavenly things unless God open them by a special act of His will. Elisha in Dothan is surrounded by the chariots and horses of the king of Syria, who was aiming to seize his person. Seeing this, the prophet's servant cries out, "Alas, my master, how shall we do?" But the man of God replies, "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And he prayed and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man and he saw; and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings vi, 13—17). Why, then, should it be incredible that the Church's rapture should take place without the world seeing it, especially when we remember that this rapture will be "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor. xv, 52)?

When the Lord returns, accompanied by all His saints, to judge the world and to establish

His kingdom, He will be seen by all. "As the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. . . . And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv, 27—30). "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen" (Rev. i, 7).*

In a word, there is no sign which must of necessity precede and announce the coming of the Lord to take away the Church. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven . . . even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i, 9, 10). Speaking to them of this coming of the Lord, he puts himself with them among those who might have part in it without passing through death, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (with the raised dead) in the clouds to meet

* The argument is, as to its main point, not affected even if we suppose, with some, that by "tribes of the earth," "kindreds of the earth," we are to understand "tribes of the *land*," "kindreds of the *land*," *i.e.* of the land of Israel.—[J. C.]

the Lord in the air" . . . (1 Thess. iv, 17). The coming of the Lord in judgment is, on the other hand, preceded by very positive signs. Before that, the gospel of the kingdom must be preached as a witness in all nations. Israel must be re-established as a nation in its own land. The abomination of desolation must be set up in the holy place (the temple of Jerusalem consequently rebuilt). The great tribulation, such as never was since there was a nation, and such as never will be, must have come upon all the inhabitants of the earth. Finally, after the apostasy the antichrist must have arisen and have done his work, since he it is whom the Lord comes to destroy. So does Paul teach, when he says, "That day shall not come except there come first the falling away, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God, . . . whom the Lord shall consume with spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. ii, 3, 4, 8).

But, let us fully notice, it is not the rapture of the Church to meet her Saviour which must be preceded by these events, it is the day of the Lord; that is to say, His coming in judgment to establish His kingdom; it is this kingdom itself.

Never did Paul say that a single one of these events must precede the coming of the Lord to meet His Church, and he could not have said so. Had he said so, his brethren would have needed but an ordinary measure of intelligence to reply to him, Paul, you deceive yourself, for you exhort us to be continually waiting for the coming of the Lord, and you tell us at the same time that this coming must be preceded by certain events, some of which can take place neither in a day, nor in a year. When, then, these events shall have been fulfilled, we will expect the Lord. This also is what may be said to those who to-day preach the coming of the Lord, but with premonitory signs.*

* It may also be remarked that the first of these scenes, that of the rapture of the Church to the presence of the Lord, is entirely unknown to the inspired writers of the Old Testament; and it must be so, since the Church or the body of Christ is the "mystery hid from ages and from generations" (Col. i, 26), which could be manifested only after the rejection of the King, and the dispensation (or stewardship) of which was reserved for Paul (Eph. iii, 2). The rapture of the Church being then, if one may so say, but the last chapter of its history here below, must have been hidden, like the Church itself, from the men of the Old Testament. The return of the Lord being, on the contrary, the return of the rejected King who comes to take possession of His kingdom, sheds its marvellous and at times terrible splendour over the whole of the Old Testament, from the books of Moses, where already it is mentioned, to the last pages of the prophets, which are filled with it.

III

Yet, in spite of these essential differences between these two acts of the coming of the Lord, some have wished so to draw them together that they should form only one, accomplished at the same time. In view of that, it is supposed that at the moment when the Lord comes forth from heaven with His armies, as we have seen in Rev. xix, 11, &c., the Church raised and changed rises from the earth and meets Him. But is there a word, one single word, as to that in the inspired record? It is then a mere supposition, gratuitous and without foundation; it is even a supposition quite improbable; for how can we admit that in such a passage the Holy Spirit has been silent as to a fact so important as the resurrection, the change and rapture of the Church, and that He has left it to us to fill up the gap for ourselves?

If the armies which accompany the Lord comprise the Church, as we believe, founding this opinion upon what is said of the fine linen, white and clean, with which they are clothed, which is the *righteousness of the saints*, if we say, the armies which follow the Lord are the Church itself, then the question is settled, for these armies "follow the Lord." But when we follow any one, we come where he comes from, and go where

he goes to. These armies come then from heaven, and not from the earth, as, in a word, is expressly said, "the armies which are in heaven follow Him."

Finally, let us retrace the course of the Apocalypse, from the passage before us till we come to Chap. v. Nowhere do we find the Church. She is not then upon the earth through the great tribulation, waiting for union with her Lord till He comes to destroy the wicked one and those who destroy the earth, in order to the establishing of His glorious kingdom. While the wrath of God is falling upon the world, the Church is in heaven, where we see her (Rev. iv and v) represented by twenty-four elders, connected doubtless with the twenty-four courses of priests and singers, who cast lots for the service of God in Israel (1 Chr. xxiv, xxv). These elders surround the throne of God and of the Lamb, themselves seated upon thrones, clothed in white raiment, having on their heads crowns of gold, in their hands harps and golden vials full of odours which are the prayers of saints. They are then kings and priests, just as are the members of the Church. "You are a royal priesthood," said Peter to his brethren (1 Pet. ii, 5, 9). "Unto Him that loved us," said the Apostle John, "and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father, to Him be glory and dominion for

ever and ever, Amen ” (Rev. i, 5, 6). Thus also say the twenty-four elders, for they sing to the slain Lamb, “Thou has redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth” (Rev. v, 9). To whom can these words belong, if not to the members of the Church, and yet, let us remark, to the members of a Church glorified in the heavens before the Lord Jesus comes from heaven to take possession of His kingdom? In fact the twenty-four elders are kings, they say so themselves, the signs of this royalty they bear in their golden crowns; and yet they do not say *we are reigning*, but “we shall reign upon the earth.”* And why? If it be not because their Lord is not come forth from heaven with His armies to take possession of His kingdom. When He shall reign, then they will reign with Him. They are also priests, these twenty-four elders, as we learn from their golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. But, if these saints whose prayers they, as priests, present to God are not the saints who dwell on the earth in the hour of the great tribulation, we know not who they can be. Thus the

* Some portion, however, of this argument falls to the ground if we accept as the true reading of Rev. v, 10, “hast made *them*,” “*they* shall reign.”—[J. C.]

twenty-four elders worship in peace before the throne of God in heaven, while from this throne, prepared for judgment, issue lightnings, thunders and voices, signs precursory of the storm of the wrath of God about to burst upon the earth, the development of which we can follow through the Apocalypse, in the thunders, the hail, the earthquakes and the overturning of all nature, until the wrath of God yields place to the wrath of the Lamb when He issues from heaven to destroy His foes.

If then we have in the twenty-four elders a figure of the Church, she is not upon the earth at the time of the wrath of God or of the great tribulation, since before that time she is worshipping in heaven, presenting the prayers of the saints who are upon the earth, and only waiting, to reign with her Lord, for the moment when He takes to Himself His kingdom.

It is said, however, that there are saints upon the earth during this great tribulation. Doubtless. There have been such since the earth has existed, and there will be such until the end; there will be such also during the great tribulation; but it does not follow that these are members of the Church. There are, first, the two witnesses of Rev. xi; but, apart from the fact that two servants of God cannot constitute the Church, these two witnesses are raised and taken to heaven before

the Lord issues from it to judge the world; thus they cannot be the Church, from the point of view even of those who see her upon the earth until the last act of the coming of the Lord. Besides, the character of these two witnesses differs entirely from that of the members of the Church. They do that which draws upon the apostles Peter and John that severe rebuke of the Lord, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them" (Luke ix, 55, 56).

They bring fire from heaven upon all those who seek to hurt them, and smite the earth with as many plagues as they will. They do, in effect, the works of servants of God under the law, the works of a Moses and an Elijah. We are even strongly inclined to think that they are really these two men of God, of a destiny so mysterious, who, after having already reappeared upon the earth at the transfiguration, will again yet once appear on it in order to bear testimony to their Lord in the decisive and terrible crisis through which their people will pass.*

* Those of Israel who still believe in Moses and the prophets are generally expecting Elijah before the coming of the Messiah. One of them said to me, "Were there no other proof that Jesus is not the true Messiah, this would be enough, that Jesus was not, as expressly announced by Malachi (ch. iv, 5), preceded by Elijah. I know well," he added, "that your New Testament

There are also on the earth during the great tribulation, the sealed 144,000 of Rev. vii; but the fact that they are drawn exclusively from the twelve tribes of Israel should absolutely suffice to prevent our seeing the Church in them. They are that little remnant of saved ones of whom the prophets speak so often, and without whom Israel would at that moment be like Sodom and would make us believe that John the Baptist was this Elijah (Matt. xvii, 10, &c.), but this is evidently an invention designed to conceal the manifest contradiction which exists between the prophecy and the gospel history." I sought in vain to make him understand that word of the Lord which removes all contradiction and explains everything, "If ye will receive (it), this is Elias which was for to come" (Matt. xi, 14). Had Israel received the testimony of John the Baptist, had they received Jesus and the kingdom which He brought, this kingdom would have come with all its blessings, and John the Baptist would have been the Elijah who was to come. But because the Lord was not received when He came in grace to bring "the acceptable year of the Lord," He must come to bring in "the day of vengeance" (Isa. lxi, 2). That will be "the great and terrible day of the Lord." Since then at His first coming in grace the Lord had, as a forerunner, John the Baptist, at His second coming He will have, as a forerunner, Elijah, who, by his faithful testimony and his mighty miracles, will lead back many of the children of Israel to the God of their fathers and will thus prevent the earth being smitten with a curse. Elijah will probably have Moses as a coadjutor in this work, whose name also is mentioned in Malachi's prophecy. These two men of God will thus at that time be the "two witnesses who prophesy clothed in sackcloth, the two olive trees, the two candlesticks, or the sons of oil who stand by the Lord of all the earth" (Zech. iv; Rev. xi).

Gomorrah; but this holy seed will spring up, as spring up the oaks and the teil trees, and, under the blessing of the God of Abraham and Jacob, will fill the habitable earth with its fruit (Isa. i, 9; vi, 13; xxvii, 6).

We have the same category of saints in Rev. xii, where a *résumé* is given us of the history of Israel, under the figure of a woman, seen first in her final glory, clothed with the sun, having a crown of twelve stars upon her head, &c., then in the bringing forth of Him who is to rule all nations with a rod of iron; then, in the hour of the great tribulation, fleeing to the wilderness, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, and miraculously preserved from the efforts of the dragon, her great adversary. This is the earthly people to whom God says by the mouth of His prophet (Isa. xxvi, 20, 21), "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee, hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." These are the elect of Israel to whom the Lord Jesus says, "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place, then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains. . . . For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not from the beginning of the

world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened (Matt. xxiv, 15—22).

Lastly, there is the great multitude of saints which no man can number, described in the same seventh chapter of the Revelation. They are not, like the 144,000, exclusively Israelites, since they are, on the contrary, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, that is to say, from every part of that world over which the antichrist in the end extends his rule. These are they who refuse to receive his mark or to worship his image, and who for their faithfulness forfeit their lives. They have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, they have not loved their lives, but have yielded themselves to death. They “have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple, &c.”

Reference has already been made to these saints in Rev. vi, 9, &c., where we see under the altar the souls of the first of these martyrs, who demand with loud voice that God should avenge their blood on those who dwell on the earth; and He gives them white robes, and tells them

to rest yet for a little season, until the number of their fellowservants is fulfilled.

In Rev. xiv, 1, &c., we again find them before the throne of God in heaven, where they sing a new song, which none can learn but the sealed 144,000, who stand upon Mount Zion—touching picture of the wonderful union which some day will be between heaven and earth.

We find again these saints a last time in Rev. xx, 4, as having part in the first resurrection.

If in some of the pictures which have just passed under our eyes we see these saints before the throne of God, in the glory, it is evidently and of necessity by anticipation.

They must, since they lose their lives in the great tribulation, be upon the earth, but they are not on that account the Church properly speaking. Doubtless, like those composing the Church, they have washed and made white their robes in the blood of the Lamb, and they give the glory of their salvation to Him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb; but these characteristics are common to saints of all times and all dispensations, from Adam and righteous Abel to the last believers who will be found upon the earth. That which compels us to say that they are not the Church is, in the first place, as we have seen, that they ask for vengeance upon those who dwell on the earth. But

the Church, whose calling is to pray for her persecutors, cannot call down vengeance upon them. Besides, every one may notice the many differences of detail recorded by the Holy Spirit between the twenty-four elders and their worship, on the one hand, and the innumerable multitude of martyrs, on the other. Are, then, these differences without object on the part of the Holy Spirit and without instruction for us? Indeed, the simple fact that the elder, who explains to John who are the saints of this innumerable multitude, presents them to him as forming a class apart from the twenty-four elders; this fact alone is enough to tell us that those saints must be distinguished from the Church. "These are they," says one of the elders, "who came out of the great tribulation." Now, the Church is indeed called to pass through afflictions and temptations (John xvi, 33; 1 Peter i, 6; Acts xiv, 22), but never through the great tribulation, or, following the more forcible expression of the original, through the "tribulation, the great one," a tribulation unique in the world's history, which the Lord Himself has characterised thus, "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Matt. xxiv, 21).

On the contrary, the Church has, in Phila-

delphia, the promise of being kept from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, and which is evidently the same thing as the great tribulation, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience" (or of my patient waiting), "I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. iii, 10).

It is true that the Church might be kept from this temptation, though remaining on the earth, as the sealed 144,000 will be, and as Noah himself was preserved from the flood while yet passing through it; but, in order that the Church be kept "from the hour" of temptation, she must be, like Enoch before the flood, outside this world where time is counted by hours. Thus Enoch, taken away before the hour of the flood, and in consequence kept from that hour, becomes a striking type of the Church "kept from the hour of temptation;" and Noah, on his part, miraculously saved in his ark in the midst of the waters of the flood through which he passes, is a type equally just of the earthly saints and, in particular, of the sealed 144,000 who pass through the great tribulation, miraculously kept and nourished in the hiding places which God has prepared for them. We think ourselves then authorised to say that the Church is not upon

the earth during the great tribulation, but that she is in heaven, where we have seen her worshipping before the throne in peace and glory, whilst from this throne proceeds the tempest of the wrath and indignation of God which bursts upon the world.

IV

Let us now examine some texts of Scripture which are cited as contradicting this teaching, and first, 1 Thess. iii, 12, 13, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love. . . . to the end He may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

It is true that there is some difficulty in quite estimating the thought of the apostle in this place, but if we were to admit that the Church passes through the great tribulation, and that she goes to meet the Lord only when He comes to establish His kingdom, the difficulty would not on that account be removed, for this difficulty seems to us to consist essentially in this, that we cannot understand how the saints, when they come again with their Lord, will still need to be *established unblamable in holiness*. Will they not then have reached perfection? Is not, then, the desire of the apostle that his brethren should be

established unblamable in holiness before God, while they are passing through this world, and this through the hope even of having their part in the coming of the Lord with all His saints? This appears to us more likely. It follows that there is here no argument against the rapture of the Church before the great tribulation.

2 Thess. i, 6, &c., is also quoted in opposition to this doctrine, "It is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

We acknowledge that if the letter only of this passage be considered, it gives reason to those who join the rapture of the Church with the coming of the Lord in judgment, and regard these two events as fulfilled at the same time. But let us consider also the intention of the inspired author. This is evidently to show that the righteousness of God is equally manifested in punishing unrighteous persecutors and in recompensing

those who have put their trust in Him. Can we not, then, understand that, to make this the clearer, he places these two acts together, without reference to the time, otherwise very short, which separates them? The Lord Himself did something like this in regard to the resurrection of the dead, when wishing to point out the principle of every resurrection, He joined, as if accomplished in the same hour, the resurrection of the just and that of the unjust (John v, 28, 29). "The hour is coming," He said, "in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." Nevertheless, we cannot doubt that these two resurrections are separated by an interval of at least a thousand years. But the Lord had on this occasion but one aim, that of showing that every resurrection, that of the unjust as much as that of the just, proceeds from Him; therefore He puts together, in one outline, these two resurrections, without concerning Himself with the question of time. Could not Paul, seeking to show God's justice glorified in the punishment of persecutors as well as in the deliverance of the persecuted, do likewise? If the Lord brought together in the same hour two acts of resurrection which in reality are separated by an interval of at least a thousand

years, might not Paul bring together in the same day two acts of resurrection which are separated by an interval of a few years ? So much the more so that in reality it is only when the Lord comes to execute His judgments upon the wicked, that He will be “glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe.” Before that they were with Him, but the world knew nothing of it. Then it will see them, and it will know that the Father has loved them as He has loved His Son (John xvii, 23 ; 2 Thess. i, 10).

Another passage is quoted (1 Thess. v, 1, &c.), “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light and the children of the day, &c.” Because at the end of the preceding chapter the apostle has spoken of the rapture of the Church to meet her Lord, it is contended that the words just quoted are the continuation of the same subject, and the conclusion is drawn from them that the coming of the Lord to take away His Church and the day of Christ are

one and the same thing. But such is not the case.

In the preceding chapter Paul had spoken of the return of the saints with their Lord: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep will God through Jesus bring with Him." Then immediately, as if he had foreseen the objection which might be made: how then can they return with Jesus from heaven if they are still upon the earth? he replies by giving a complete picture of the rapture of the Church to the presence of her Lord, in the air, a picture which fills the end of chap. iv. Then in chap. v, returning to the subject already touched upon, the return of our Lord with His saints, he says, "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, &c." This mention alone of the "times and the seasons" should suffice to lead us to think that it is not a question here of the coming of the Lord to take away His Church; for, in that case, it is never a question of times and seasons, but it is indeed so when it concerns the Lord's return with His Church to take possession of His Kingdom. Then, as there are signs, there are also "times and seasons" noted in prophecy; there is "the week," "the half week," there is a "time, times, half a time," "forty and two months," "one thousand two hundred and sixty

days," "the thousand three hundred and thirty-five days," &c. (Dan. ix, 27 ; vii, 25 ; xii, 11, 12 ; Rev. xi, 2, 3 ; xii, 6 ; xiii, 5).

When, after His resurrection, the disciples ask the Lord if yet is the time to restore the kingdom to Israel, He replies, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" (Acts i, 6, 7). As to what Paul calls "the day of the Lord," if this be, as is said, the same thing as the coming of the Lord to meet His Church, is it not very strange that the apostle, writing to his brethren, compares this day to a thief who comes in the night? Is it thus that the Bridegroom comes to invite His bride to the wedding? No, if we look throughout the word of the Old and New Testament for what is there called the day of the Lord, the day of Christ, the day of God, we shall see that this is always the millennial epoch of the reign of God, considered from different points of view ; sometimes, for example, from that of the judgments which establish it at the coming of the Lord, sometimes from that of the happiness which Israel and the world will then enjoy, sometimes even from that of the end of that epoch, as in 2 Pet. iii, where he tells us that in that day, that is to say, in the evening, in the end of that day, the heavens and the earth will pass away.

The Lord Jesus coming to receive His Church

is, in the Scripture, the "bright and morning star" which precedes the day (2 Pet. i, 19; Rev. xxii, 16); the Lord coming to set up His kingdom is the "Sun of righteousness," introducing the day, that day which "shall burn as an oven all the proud and all that do wickedly, and shall leave them neither root nor branch" (Matt. iv, 1, 2).

Before leaving the fifth chapter to the Thesalonians, let us make yet one remark on a word in this chapter, verse 9. "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ," a word to which enough attention has not been given, and which is of great weight in the question occupying us. If we seek to gather the meaning of this word *wrath* in the Revelation, where it is so often met with, and in those places in the epistles where it is found in connection with the coming of the Lord, we shall see that this word has no other meaning than "the temptation which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth," or, which is the same thing, "the great tribulation." To convince ourselves of this, it is enough to remark that the last plagues of the Revelation are called the plagues in which "is filled up the wrath of God" (Rev. xv, 1).

If, then, this be the case, and if we have the promise of being sheltered from this wrath, must

we not conclude that the Church will not pass through the great tribulation? Is not this signified by such declarations as these, "Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (1 Thess. i, 9, 10). When the vials of the wrath of God are poured out upon the world, the Church will be in safety, near her Lord; those belonging to her who have fallen asleep being raised, and those who are alive and remain till that moment being changed that they may live all together and for ever with Him.

Another objection is made (2 Thess. ii, 1, &c), "Now, we beseech you, brethren, in regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is come (*not at hand*). Let no man deceive you by any means, for that day shall not come, &c."

It is said that Paul desires here to warn his brethren against the dangers of a too immediate expectation of the Lord and of their gathering unto Him. The rationalists, who ask nothing better than to find in Paul some error, that they may dispose of his authority, say that, having gone beyond the mark in his first letter

to the Thessalonians, he here recurs to his teaching in order to correct or modify it. But we can, with slight attention, see that, very far from wishing to modify in any way the thoughts of his brethren as to the coming of their Lord and their gathering together unto Him, he, on the contrary, conjures them not to let themselves be moved in these thoughts by anything, even if one were to allege a direct revelation of the Spirit, or a letter said to be written by him, Paul. But, what were these opinions which the apostle had sought to inculcate on the Thessalonians? We have already had occasion to refer to them. He had taught them that one of the ends even of their conversion was to wait for the Son of God from heaven, Who had delivered them from the wrath to come. He had spoken to them of the coming of the Lord to take away His church, as if at any moment they might have part in it without passing through death: "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (the raised dead) to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. iv, 17). Such are the ideas in which he urges them to remain firm and unshaken. Why, then, does he add, "Let no man deceive you, as that the day of Christ is come, for that day shall not come except there come the apostasy first and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, whom

the Lord shall destroy " (2 Thess. ii, 3, 8). For a very simple reason, namely, that if the Thessalonians had allowed themselves to be persuaded by the false teachers who said : The day of Christ is come ; they would have been compelled to renounce the hope of being gathered to their Lord before that day, since the moment for it would have passed. When the sun has risen and the day is come, it is too late to rejoice in the sweet splendour of the morning star.

If any say, as has been sometimes said, that the end of the world is come, and if it be sought to shake thus our hope of being before that with the Lord, could we do better than show by Scripture all that must yet take place before the world come to an end ? Thus does Paul in regard to the day of Christ, said by some badly instructed teachers *to have come*, confounding, perhaps, the afflictions, through which Christians were then passing, with the great tribulation which is to precede the day of Christ. The apostle reminds the Thessalonians of what must yet happen before that day—the apostasy, the man of sin, &c.—in order to prove to them that that day is not come, that there is time for the realisation of their hope of being in that day with the Lord. They have, then, only to remain firm and unshaken in their thought.

We have sometimes heard it said that it is

selfish to rejoice at escaping by means of the rapture from the great tribulation. Ought we not to regard the different trials which fall upon us as occasion of perfect joy, and is it not a grace given to suffer for Christ as well as to believe on Him? True, but the great tribulation has a special character, and one quite different from the various afflictions through which we now pass. These are never the effect of the wrath and vengeance of an offended God, but the correction of a Father who tries us and chastens us for our good, that we may be made partakers of His holiness. The great tribulation, on the contrary, is that day of the *vengeance of God*, often spoken of by the prophets (Deut. xxxii, 35; Isa. lxiii, 3, 4), and before which the Lord stopped short in the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke iv, 16, &c.; Isa. lxi, 2), because He did not come to bring vengeance at that time, but the acceptable year of the Lord. It is the *indignation* of God which, long hanging over a rebellious world, bursts at length, and from before which God invites even the remnant of His earthly people to hide themselves (Isa. xxvi, 20). It is, in fact, the *wrath of God*, as it is so often called in the Apocalypse, which itself is, from chapter iv to xix, but the history of this wrath. The present is the time of the patience of God and of His perfect grace toward the

world which He calls to repentance, and in the midst of which He works by His Spirit. When that terrible hour is come of the last temptation, it seems as if God says, as before the flood, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh," and "God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in the unrighteousness" (2 Thess. ii, 11, 12). All this is of a nature to make us understand why, while God causes His Church to pass through many afflictions, He designs to shield her from the great tribulation; and if such be His good pleasure, why should we not rejoice thereat? This leads us to say something as to the fruits of this patient waiting.

v

These fruits answer to the deepest wants of the Christian heart. What, in fact, could the Christian more need in this world of sin, mourning and tears, than sanctification and comfort? Now, these are precisely the fruits of an habitual waiting for the Lord. After the grace which flows from the cross, there is no more efficacious means of sanctification. Doubtless this is why the Holy Spirit has united these two things in the following *résumé*, so clear and so substantial,

of the truth and of the Christian life, "The grace of God, that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Tit. ii, 11—14). Behold, then, in the grace which brings salvation to all men, the foundation of all Christian life; in the blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ behold its topstone. "Behold," says also the Apostle John, "what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. . . Beloved, now are we the sons of God; but what we shall be doth not yet appear. But we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii, 1—3). Observe, it is not merely an exhortation, "let every one that has this hope in Him purify himself, &c.," but it is a fact, "he that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

How, in fact, could any one have the heart

filled with the hope of soon being with Jesus, and not study to be found of Him without spot and blameless, in peace? How could he cherish this hope in his heart, and, at the same time, walk in the hatreds, the revengeful feelings, the quarrels, the backbitings, the lusts, and the idolatries of the world? While the works of the flesh render all communion with the Lord here below absolutely impossible, could any one think that he might carry them with him into heaven, that abode of light and perfect holiness, into which shall enter nothing impure and defiled? No, these things may exist with an intellectual and dead knowledge of the coming of the Lord, and of our being united to Him, but not with a spiritual and living hope of this union; for it is written "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." The hope of soon being with Jesus inspires in us the desire of being like Him, and, by contemplating Him, we are even now transformed into His image and likeness; the idols fall and are broken in pieces, like that of Dagon in his temple, when the ark of God had entered it; worldly troubles diminish; lusts are extinguished and die, to give place to heavenly thoughts and affections.

The single fact that we are the bride of the King whom the world has rejected—the bride left here by Him for a short time with the

promise that He will soon return to take her to share His triumph and His glory—this fact alone, truly laid hold of by faith, is of a nature to show us to what separation from the world we are called. Can, indeed, this bride participate in the joys, sit at the banquets of those who have rejected her Bridegroom? You say, No. To have part in the feasts of rebels would be to have part in their rebellion, and to find pleasure in them. The rejoicings of rebels cannot be the rejoicings of the bride of the King. Those rejoice in having freed themselves from Him whom they hated; their hope is to have nothing more to do with Him. His name even could not be uttered in their midst without provoking a cold and disdainful silence, or a badly-concealed impatience and anger. But can the bride, whose happiness it is to think of her Bridegroom and to expect Him soon, seek her pleasure where she would not dare even to name Him whom she loves?

Is it more seemly for her to be associated in the politics of the rebels, to sit in their councils, should they be willing to admit her? Again you say, No, for the policy of rebels can be, neither in its end nor in its means, that of the King against whom they have rebelled, and, therefore, that of His bride. When the King has re-established His disowned authority, when

He reigns, then she will reign with Him. Till then her true attitude is to wait patiently for her Bridegroom, watchful lest anything come to take in her heart and life the place which belongs to Him Who first loved her and bought her with His blood in order that she may be His for ever.

Thus, the thought of the near approach of the Lord is eminently calculated to sanctify, by raising the heart above the world, its occupations, and its lusts; and as it sanctifies while comforting, so does it comfort while it sanctifies. Were this truth not proved by experience, it would be enough to convince ourselves of it to read these words, with which the Apostle Paul finishes the most complete picture which he has traced of the coming of the Lord and our union with Him: "Comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. iv, 15—18). The Thesalonians, differing widely in this from most Christians of our time, believed with a faith so simple and childlike in the approaching coming of the Lord, that they doubted not they would see Him without passing through death; but in their simplicity, and in a measure in their ignorance, they inquired with anxiety what would become of those who had fallen asleep. It is upon this point that Paul wishes definitely to instruct them: "But I would not have you to

be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." To this end he, before everything, seeks to fix their eyes on Jesus, the Head of the body, the Church, its firstfruits, the first born from the dead—Jesus, the cause and the chief of all resurrection; "for if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep will God through Jesus bring with Him." God will bring them with Jesus, their Chief, when He comes to take possession of His kingdom. But this may give rise to the question: How can God bring these saints again with Jesus if they are still upon the earth? The Apostle foresees the objection, and answers the question by a special revelation as to the rapture of the Church to the presence of her Lord: "For this we say unto you by the Word of the Lord" (by a special revelation), "that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not anticipate them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." Far, then, from the dead in Christ being left in their graves and losing their part in the glorious day of the coming of the Lord, they will be the first to enter it; for we shall not anticipate them, we

who are alive and remain at that hour; on the contrary, they will rise first. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."

Such is the gathering together given to the family of God, from which not one of its members will be absent, for He Who has undertaken to present them there is the Lord Himself, Faithful and True, the Conqueror of death and the tomb.

Be comforted then with this hope, you who mourn loved ones fallen asleep in the Lord, you will meet them again at that gathering together. Doubtless even now they are not dead; the God in Whom they believed, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, is not the God of the dead but of the living, and all live unto Him. These also live, then, unto Him, but in spirit; as dying Stephen said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts vii, 59). In holy and happy repose they await, as we do here in the wilderness, the redemption of the body and the gathering together of the family of God. Then you will meet them again, no longer with infirmities of every kind which made them groan, for then, changed as to this

weak body of humiliation into the likeness of the Lord, they will resemble Him. You will again meet them, never again to leave you, as happens in this world, where farewells end everything, but then, all of us filled with the life of the Lord Jesus, we shall be with Him for ever.

You, also, who groan under the weight of the struggle against sin, the world and the devil, comfort yourselves with these words. Soon will Satan be bruised under the feet of the saints, and no longer will they have to traverse the miry places of this world, in which they have daily to wash their feet ; they will walk clothed in white raiment in the golden streets of the holy city. Such is the lot of those who have overcome. Be strong, then, in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, remembering that there is no victory without conflict, and that the husbandman must labour before he partake of the fruits.

Do you suffer from the infirmities of this body of sin ? Paul also groaned on account of them, but he consoled himself with the hope of the redemption of the body at the coming of the Lord : " We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened ; not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up by life " (2 Cor. v, 4). After having shown that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, he adds,

“Ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. viii, 23). In that your body is weakened and undermined by infirmities, is there more than an opportunity of suffering and humbling for yourself, of succour and patience for others? Well, do as Paul did, comfort yourselves with the assurance that, when the Lord comes, He will change this body of your humiliation, and will make it like to the body of His glory. Then, endowed with power and blessing, it will be borne without more effort than your present thought, wherever the service of the Lord shall call it. While awaiting that happy hour, profit by the opportunity which you have to-day, but will not perhaps have to-morrow, to glorify God by patience in the midst of afflictions; and to this end remember these three grand words: “Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, persevering in prayer” (Rom. xii, 12).

Perhaps you hear now but indistinctly the sweet voice of your fellows, your communications with them are thus limited and difficult. But be comforted. Soon you will, in the bright paradise of God, hear the sweet songs of the redeemed and of the angels; you will hear unspeakable things which the tongue of Paul himself could

not utter, and which the ears of his brethren could not hear. While waiting, be diligent in seeking communion with the Lord, and so much the more that you can have little with men.

Perhaps your eyes, dimmed like those of the patriarchs, no longer discern clearly the features of your relations and friends. No longer can you look into their eyes, that mirror of the soul. The beauties of this terrestrial world, among which God has placed you, are now seen by you only, as it were, through the mists of an autumn day. But be comforted. Soon with the eyes of your glorified body you will see the splendours of a celestial world, such as no eye of flesh, though piercing as the eagle's, could endure. You will see the holy and glorious inhabitants of that new world, the cherubim, the seraphim, the angels. You will see those patriarchs, those prophets, those apostles, and all those martyrs of Jesus with whom, though you may never have seen their face, you have already passed such sweet moments. Lastly, you will see the Lord Jesus Himself, Him Who through His death purchased that happiness for you, and Who will eternally remain its centre, its everlasting source. You will see Him as He is, and that sight will fill your heart with more joy and gladness than all other of heaven's beauties.

For you who have till now refused or delayed

to open the heart to the Lord Jesus, His return, from whatever point of view it may be regarded, can not be a source of comfort and strength. It is even to be feared that, in order to rid yourself of this importunate thought, you seek to stifle it in worldly dissipation, or to persuade yourself that it is only the fruit of a romantic imagination or of a foolish credulity, a thought with which you have nothing to do. If so, undeceive yourself, and listen : every man in the world, whether he believe it or not, whether he concern himself about it or not, must have to do with Jesus as his Saviour or as his Judge. The eternal Son of God has bought the world with His blood, and has thus acquired power over all men in the world, one day to raise them, to give eternal life to those who have received Him and to judge those who reject Him. If, therefore, you have Him not now as a Saviour, some day you will have Him as your Judge. In return for His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, "God also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii, 6—11). If, then, you do not now willingly bow the knee before the Lord Jesus,

the One Who has bought you with His blood, and Who alone can save you, you will be compelled to bow before Him in the terror and despair of those who are cast away, when the earth and the heaven flee away from before the great white throne, where sits the Lord Jesus himself, and death and Hades deliver up the dead, small and great, to be judged out of the things which are written in the books, according to their works (Rev. xx, 11—13). But this is still the hour of God's patience, it is the day of salvation for you if you will have it; for still does God offer you His full and entire pardon, His Holy Spirit and the glory of His heaven, and, as all this is the fruit of the blood and work of Jesus, it is offered freely in His name, on the sole condition that you repent and believe. So doing, you may from that time rejoice to wait for the return of the Lord, for you are of those for whom He thus prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world (John xvii, 24). "To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;" for "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. iv, 7, 8; ii, 3). "The Spirit and the bride say, "Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst

come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely " (Rev. xxii, 17).

IV

Antichrist

AND HIS DESTRUCTION BY THE LORD WHEN
HE COMES TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM

WHEN the Church has been gathered into the heavenly mansions, when Israel, the earthly people, is again found in the land, and the Roman empire, the fourth beast of Daniel, dreadful, and terrible, and strong, has come up from the sea of the peoples,* with his Satanic power, his seven heads, and his ten horns,† then

* I cannot help questioning the opinion that in “the great sea” of Dan. vii, 2, we have a type of the peoples or nations. This idea, held certainly by many, appears to have been taken from Rev. xvii, 15, where the waters upon which the whore sits are said to be “peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.” But the “many waters” (ver. 1) are rivers, not sea, see Jer. li, 13, where the reference is clearly to the mighty river Euphrates, to which the ancient Babylon owed its greatness. By “the great sea,” then, of Daniel we are to understand the Mediterranean (see also Ezek. xlvii, 10, and Num. xxxiv, 6, 7), in connection with which each of the four beasts rises in succession into supreme power.—[J. C.]

† See Appendix A.

will be revealed the Antichrist,* that dreadful being of whom we must now speak, and who fills the last days of the age with the noise of his blasphemies and his persecutions.

I

He will be seen coming up as a little horn among the ten horns which are upon the head of the Roman beast. The ten horns are ten kings which arise out of this kingdom. The little horn, then, is also a king, as, indeed, is elsewhere expressly said ; but he is a king, diverse from the other ten ; in the first place, doubtless, because of his small beginnings and his marvellous rise ; for in a short time he subdues three of the ten kings and rules over the other seven. Thus he becomes the head, the representative of the Roman empire in which he was born, but he especially differs from the ten kings by his religious, or rather irreligious, character. He has eyes like the eyes of man, that is to say, superiority in intelligence and discernment. He must, indeed be endowed with all that gains the admiration of men, since he will have “power over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations, and all that dwell upon the earth will worship him, whose names are not

* Meaning *he who is opposed to Christ, though assuming to be Christ.*

written in the book of life of the slain Lamb. There is also given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies, and he will open his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. xiii, 5—8), that is to say, the saints, doubtless, of the Church who have been caught up into heaven before the appearing of the wicked one. It is even given unto him to "make war with the saints and to prevail against them, and they will be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time" (Dan. vii, 21, 25). These are the two constant and essential characteristics of the Antichrist, that he blasphemes God and His saints, whom he also persecutes, breathing out his impious rage in blasphemies against those whom he cannot reach.

But in order to understand how the saints are given into his hand "until a time, and times, and the dividing of time," it must be noticed that the time of Antichrist's activity corresponds exactly with the seventieth week of Daniel, which is yet to transpire. Now this week of years* is

* The word "week" in Dan. ix simply signifies in the Hebrew a heptad, or a seven, and might be a heptad of days, months, years, or, indeed, of anything. The context determines that in this chapter the heptad, or seven, is one of years. In chap. x, on the other hand, we are expressly told that the weeks there spoken of are weeks of days (see ver. 2, margin).

—[J. C.]

divided in Scripture into two equal parts, each, consequently of three years and a half, which are indifferently called "a time, and times, and half a time, or forty and two months, or a thousand two hundred and threescore days" (Dan. vii, 25 ; Rev. xi, 2, 3 ; xiii, 5). These two half weeks correspond to two very distinct phases of the history of Antichrist. The first half of the week is the time of his rise.*

With a political motive, doubtless, he makes a covenant with the Jews, he permits them to rebuild their temple and re-establish their worship, he tolerates and protects them ; but in the midst of the week, intoxicated in the pride of his power, and driven to the extreme in his wickedness by him whose instrument he is, he breaks the covenant, causes the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and in crowning iniquity seeks to make himself worshipped in his image or his idol, which he even places in the temple of God.

He is assisted in this by a second person, called in the Word "the false prophet" (Rev. xix, 20), whom it also calls "another beast coming up out of the earth."† This beast has two horns like a lamb, but he speaks as a dragon, and exercises all the power of the first beast in his presence,

* See Appendix B.

† Or "land," perhaps that of Judea, that land of true and of false prophets.

and he causes all the earth, wondering, to go after the beast. He does also great wonders, even making fire come down from heaven in the sight of men, and deceives by means of the great miracles which it is given him to do in the sight of the beast, commanding men to make an image to the beast which had received the wound by a sword and yet lives. And it is permitted to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that even the image of the beast should speak, and cause that all who would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their forehead, and that no man may buy or sell but he that hath the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Rev. xiii, 11—17).

In the presence of declarations so positive, can any one doubt that there will yet be made an image to the head of the last empire, and that, the false prophet aiding with his miracles and his Satanic power, all must worship it under penalty of death.

It is thus that we must understand these words of Daniel concerning the "prince that shall come," or the Antichrist: "He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and by the overspreading of abominations he shall make it

desolate, even until the consummation, and that which is determined shall be poured upon the desolator" (Dan. ix, 27). After having caused the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, that is to say, the Jewish ceremonial, for a time re-established in the restored temple, he will place his idol in the temple; and as all those who refuse to worship him will be put to death, this will be the signal of a desolation without example in the midst of desolated Israel.

Also in this sense must be understood these words of the Lord to His disciples, when they asked Him what would be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age: "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth let him understand)." In other words, when you see the idol of the Antichrist (in the language of the Scripture an idol is an abomination) placed in the temple of Jerusalem (God knows no other holy place upon the earth than that), "then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains . . . for there shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mat. xxiv, 15—21). Those who understand will understand these warnings and will profit by them to flee. These will be the hundred and forty-four thousand from all the

tribes of Israel sealed to be the holy seed which shall repeople the earth. They will be the woman of Rev. xii, who flees to the Wilderness from the face of the dragon with ten horns and seven heads, to be nourished there a time, times, and half a time. The blood of those who remain and refuse to worship the beast will be poured out like water round about Jerusalem, for the Lord Himself says that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved, but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

It has been sought, it is true, to apply that to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans forty years after the Lord's death, but without any foundation. At the taking of Jerusalem by the Romans, the temple was burnt by them with some hundreds of Jews who had there sought a refuge, nor was the temple defiled by any idol. Besides, one remark alone would suffice to show the fallacy of this application, namely, that the Lord, speaking of the great tribulation caused by the presence of the abomination in the holy place, adds, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the

earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matt. xxiv, 29, 30). Was that seen at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans? Certainly not. Then, when the Lord spoke to His disciples of the abomination of desolation in the holy place, and of the unparalleled tribulation which would ensue, He was not speaking of that which would take place at the destruction of Jerusalem, but of that which would happen at the end of the age, at the time of the Antichrist, in whom alone these words will have their fulfilment.

There is a people on the earth, whose history, whose existence even, proclaims a Creator God, the Ruler of the World, a faithful God, and One mighty to accomplish both His promises and His threats. It is this people, whom Antichrist especially attacks, to gain them to his atheism and his blasphemies, and, if unable to do so, to persecute and exterminate them. This people is now rendering its worship in a place which God has from time immemorial chosen for that end, and which He has many times honoured with the most striking proofs of His glorious presence. It is in this place that, with an outrageous contempt for the majesty of God, Antichrist causes himself to be worshipped in his abominable image.

Without doubt, in this he follows in the steps of his predecessors, the heads of the earlier kingdoms of the Gentiles, for all have made war with God and His saints ; and doubtless it must needs be so, in order to teach us that in all ages and under every climate man is the enemy of God.

Nebuchadnezzar has his image of gold raised in the plain of Dura, commanding that "whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." To the three young Hebrews who refuse to obey his orders he addresses these really blasphemous words, "Who is that God who shall deliver you out of my hands?"

Darius puts his hand to the impious decree submitted to him by his advisers, "that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of the king, shall be cast into the den of lions."

Not to speak of Alexander, surnamed the Great, who called himself son of Jupiter, great god of heaven, Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the most celebrated of his successors, profaned in the most horrible manner the temple of Jerusalem, even to sacrificing swine and placing in it the images of his false gods. A very great number of Jews then perished, either in battle or in punishments inflicted on those who refused to commit such an act of idolatry.

Lastly, in the first phase of the fourth kingdom, that of Rome, tens of thousands of Christians forfeited their lives for refusing to perform an act of worship before the statues of the emperors, who after their death were placed in the rank of gods.

Nevertheless, all this was but a type and a very imperfect fulfilment of what will take place at the time of Antichrist, for in making war with God and His saints, these earlier heads of the kingdoms of the Gentiles simply sought to assert the superiority of their gods over the God of Israel, the true God Whom they knew not. They did not think of denying the existence of any divinity above themselves, of making of man himself their god; whereas this is the very thought of Antichrist. This head of the last kingdom of the Gentiles "neither regards the gods of his fathers, nor the desire of women" (Dan. xi, 37). He does not regard any god, and if he honours in its place the god Mauzzim (verse 38, margin), or the god of forces, these are, without doubt, the forces of nature, or rather the forces which the devil places at his service and which draw all men after him. That Antichrist does not regard any god, and that at the same time he honours in his place the god of forces, is a contradiction, it will be said; perhaps so, but it is one of those contradictions with which the heart

of man is filled, and of which history presents to us more than one example. In France, the men of 1793 regarded neither the God of their fathers nor any god, and yet they worshipped themselves in the worship rendered to the goddess Reason.

Such are, according to Daniel, this great prophet of the kingdoms of Gentiles, the most essential features of the Antichrist.

II

In the prophets in general, and in the Psalms in particular, Antichrist is presented to us, not in relation to the last Gentile kingdom, but rather as the most complete type of iniquity and of human wickedness, as a mirror intended to reflect in every part that evil, the germ of which is carried in their hearts by men of all times.

For example, who could refuse to see the Antichrist in "the wicked one," "the man of the earth" of Psalm x, all whose thoughts are that there is no God, and who persecutes to death the afflicted flock? Him we have also in "the fool" of Psalm xiv, "who says in his heart, There is no God. . . . They eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD. There were they in great fear, for God is in the generation of the righteous." Such are the

essential characteristics of the Antichrist, even denial of God and persecution of His saints. The sight of this triumph of wickedness puts into the heart of the Psalmist a desire for deliverance by the coming of the Lord. "Oh! that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of His people Jacob shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad." Often also does the psalmist see the sudden destruction of the wicked one, followed by the deliverance of the earthly saints, who thus enter upon the enjoyment of millennial felicity. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree (Ps. xxxvii, 35).

The Lord Jesus foretold Antichrist to the Jews when He said to them, "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive Me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John v, 43). We have here in two words the essential features of the Antichrist in contrast with those of the true Christ. While the latter always spoke and acted in the name of His Father and with His glory in view, Antichrist, on the contrary, speaks and acts only in his own name, in the name of the man whom he aims to exalt and place above God.

With Paul, Antichrist is "the man of sin, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is

worshipped, so that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. . . . Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." The Prophet Daniel and the Revelation, in perfect harmony with these words of Paul, have already furnished the explanation of them, for which reason we will not further consider them (2 Thess. ii, 3, &c.).

Finally, the Apostle John says, "Who is the liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John ii, 22).

III

If now what we have said is true, it is evident that Antichrist is not the pope, as some think. We have, in fact, seen Antichrist come up as a little horn in the midst of the ten horns which are upon the head of the Roman beast in his last phase. But the kingdom represented by this beast has not yet reappeared in its last form, a confederation of ten kingdoms. It has not then been in a condition to produce Antichrist, while the pope has existed for centuries.

The pope has had nothing to do with Jerusalem, where he never lived, nor with its temple, where his image has never been placed for men to worship it. The pope or the papacy (for such is indeed the meaning ordinarily given to this word), the papacy is not even one person, as Antichrist will be, placed in circumstances exceptional and unique of their kind. The papacy is a series of men who have succeeded each other during many ages, in circumstances and with characters differing in the extreme.

Lastly, the pope does not deny the Father and the Son, as does Antichrist. On the contrary, he asserts himself to be the vicar of Christ and the representative of God on earth, so that were there no longer God and Christ, there would no longer be any reason for the pope.

Doubtless, when the Waldenses of Piedmont, in the twelfth century, wrote against the pope their work, 'The Antichrist;' when our reformers, in the sixteenth century, seldom called the pope by any other name than that of Antichrist, they were in a measure right. The pope was the great Antichrist of their time, for no one more than he dishonoured God in despising His word, or persecuted His saints with greater fury. He was, and he is, an antichrist in the sense in which the Apostle John said that in his time there were already many antichrists (1 John ii,

18, 19). He is *an* antichrist, as are all who oppose Christ and His saints, but he is not *the* Antichrist.

Popery answers to a development of Satan, that old serpent, in the war which he has from the beginning waged against God and His Word. The antichrist answers to another development of this enemy of God and men.

When Christianity appeared in the world, the devil at first sought to drown it in the blood of its confessors ; but soon perceiving that the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, he had recourse to other means. He set himself to pervert Christianity and to corrupt it, while appearing to protect, and even to perfect it. Thus, in replacing a free and complete salvation by meritorious works, he took away from Christianity its power for regeneration and sanctification. In burdening it with idolatrous and superstitious practices, with vain and often ridiculous traditions, he exposed it to the contempt of earnest men. Lastly, in making it to be an instrument of avarice and oppression, he drew upon it the hatred of the peoples, and even of kings. Well, popery is the chief result of this work of the enemy. But, in the midst of all these corruptions of the truth, there yet remains a Creator God, Sovereign of the world, a Christ, very God and very man, dead and risen again for sinners,

there remains the Word, source of all truth through which men may still be led to salvation. This is not taken into account by the adversary, who has never renounced his project, manifested in Eden, to lead man in rejecting God to put himself in His place, and to worship himself. After many developments, which have all had as their object to prepare and to assure the realisation of this project, he in the end returns to it with redoubled rage aided by all that a long contempt for the grace of God has done for the blinding and hardening of the heart of man. In Eden he made use of the serpent. In this last and supreme development, his instrument is Antichrist who is aided by his false prophet and his lying miracles. "What," he will say to those whom he seeks to draw after him, "has God spoken? No. What they give you for His word is but a confused mass of human traditions, legends and fables. God does not speak, He cannot speak, for He does not exist. He is only the fruit of a sickly and fearful imagination, an invention of priests who make use of it to lord it over the people. Banish, then, from your minds this phantom of an invisible Master above you, Who sees and hears you, and will some day judge you. Break off these yokes, cast far off these bonds of an antiquated superstition. Boldly eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Only believe

what your reason tells you, and do without remorse and consideration everything which promises you joy and happiness. Then you will be no longer slaves, but your own masters, you will be as gods, knowing good and evil."

All must agree, this is not the language of popery. No, the pope is not Antichrist. The pope disappears, with his superstitions, with his authority so long usurping itself over consciences, over peoples, and over kings. Antichrist comes, with his bold denial of God and his blasphemous exaltation of man whom he wishes to put in the place of God.

Popery is the whore that sits upon the beast, (Rev. xvii, 3). What, indeed, could this woman be but corrupt Christianity, having for its head popery and the pope, who says that he is its infallible head? Is it not popery which as it were rides upon the civil power, which it has always pretended to rule, and which it declares indispensable to the exercise of its spiritual power? Is it not popery which, after having perverted and corrupted the things of God, has prostituted them and sold them to the peoples and kings, for the gold, the purple, and the pearls with which it delights to deck itself? Is it not popery which, after having attracted the multitudes by its pomps and idolatries, makes them drunk with the wine of the wrath of her fornica-

tion, even making them the instruments of her persecutions?

We know already who is this beast who opens his mouth in blasphemies against God, His tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven, who persecutes the saints, who are even delivered into his hands "a time, and times, and half a time." We know that this is Antichrist. Now, very far from the whore or popery on the one hand, and the beast or Antichrist on the other, being one and the same person, the whore must be devoured and destroyed by the ten kings, before these give their power to the beast, that is, before the beast enters upon the phase of his power and activity.

And it is not only as to the epoch of their destruction that these two persons differ, but also as to the manner even of that destruction. The whore is destroyed by the kings with whom she has committed fornication, following a common enough dispensation of the righteous ways of God Who employs as instruments of our chastisement those whom we have made instruments of sin. The Antichrist, who directly opposes the Lord, is reserved for Him to judge, when He comes to establish His kingdom.

The prophet Daniel has already taught us that it is "because of the great words which the horn spake" that the judgment is set, in which the

beast in cast into the fire, and the kingdom and dominion and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven are given to the Son of man and to the saints of the high places (Dan. vii).

The nineteenth chapter of Revelation, which we have already had occasion to quote more than once, presents to us, in all its sombre majesty, the terrible and final judgment of Antichrist. On the one hand we see the Lord come forth from heaven upon a white horse, and followed by the armies of heaven, mounted as He is, upon white horses and clothed in fine linen, white and clean. He is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. On His head are many crowns,* for He comes to take possession of His kingdom; from His mouth issues a sharp sword, wherewith to smite the nations, whom He breaks like a potter's vessel, and He treads the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of Almighty God. On the other hand, we see the beast, the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sitteth upon the

* The word translated "crowns" in Rev. xix, 12, signifies royal crowns—diadems. It occurs only in this passage and in Rev. xii, 3, and xiii, 1. In contrast with the dragon, who has seven, and the beast, who has ten, the Lord now appears with *many* crowns.—[J. C.]

horse and against His army. But the beast is taken and the false prophet with him, and they are cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, while the rest are slain with the sword of Him that sitteth upon the horse.

This is the Branch [rather shoot, or sucker] of Isaiah who "smites the earth with the rod of His mouth, and who slays the wicked one with the breath of His lips" (Isa. xi, 4).

This is the Lord who destroys "the man of sin, the son of perdition, with the Spirit of His mouth and the brightness of His coming" (2 Thess. ii, 4, 8).

Thus at length does the Lord answer the prayers of His saints who long have said, "Oh ! that Thou wouldst rend the heavens, that Thou wouldst come down" (Isa. lxiv, 1), and the defiance of the impious mockers who say, "Where is the promise of His coming" (2 Pet. iii, 4), "let Him show Himself, and we will believe in Him." He has shown Himself in His magnificent glory, and the wicked, terrified, and distracted, have sought refuge in the rocks of the mountains and in the caves of the earth. But it is in vain, the sword which goes out of the mouth of Him who sits upon the horse has reached them, and the fowls of heaven have been filled with their flesh. No longer can any doubt the faithfulness of the Lord and His power to accomplish

all that He has said, His threats no less than His promises. Satan, the great seducer of the world, is bound for a thousand years in the bottomless pit, that he may no longer seduce the nations. The saints of God, and particularly those who have given their lives for the Word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ in the great tribulation, are seen in celestial glory. This is the eternal and glorious kingdom of the Lord, which replaces the Satanic, but ephemeral, kingdom of Antichrist.

IV

Seeing that Antichrist is not yet on the earth, it will perhaps be said, why occupy ourselves so much with him? No, Antichrist is not yet on the earth, but his spirit is. It was here even in the days of the Apostle John, why should it not be here to-day?

It is Antichrist who says, for example, "Of all men Jesus is the one who has till now most deserved to be called the Son of God." For under this traitorous and lying appearance of a respectful attachment to Jesus Christ, His true character is in reality denied. No longer is He the eternal Son of God, making Himself of no reputation to take the form of a servant, and humbling Himself even to the death of the cross in order to

redeem lost man, He is a man raising Himself by His own energy, His human energy, so as to merit being called, so to speak, the Son of God. And when it is said that He, of all men, most deserves this title, "at least till now," it is intended we should think that there may come, and doubtless will come, another who will deserve it yet more. Thus is the way made in a near future for Antichrist.

So is it almost when it is said that Jesus is the regenerator of modern society, the author of the purest morality ever preached in the world. It is again man who is exalted in Jesus Christ when people speak thus, and attention is not paid to the fact that either Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, one with the Father, as He declared that He was, or He is but an impostor. But, that the purest morality ever seen in the world should be the work of an impostor, is a miracle more difficult to believe than any of the sacred record, for these are above nature, but that is contrary to nature. One even of the most remarkable signs of the present time is the agreement with which Jew and Gentile, rabbi and pastor, progress in a common rationalism. It is as if they were yielding obedience to one word of command. Yes, just as Jew and Gentile once united in the persons of Herod, Pontius Pilate, and the rulers of Israel, to reject the true Christ,

Who came in the name of His Father, so must they yet once again unite to receive Him who comes in His own name. For this dreadful beast of the last times must be "worshipped by all that dwell upon the earth," therefore by Jew and Gentile, "whose names are not written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb" (Rev. xiii, 8).

Moreover, the poisonous breath of the spirit of Antichrist reaches not only those who are openly ranged under the banner of rationalism. He who would not desire to be called a freethinker, and still less a forerunner of Antichrist, yet works for him, who discriminates in the Scripture that which is really the Word of God and that which is not; for in this way he shakes faith in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and consequently faith in the true Christ, the Christ of God.*

Another does not intend to deny the inspiration of the Scriptures, but he arrives at the same result, who perverts and reduces to nothing by spiritualising interpretations some of the most precious teachings of the Word. If, for example,

* Without doubt all the words which we read in Scripture are not, taking them alone, the words of God, since we meet in them also the words of the wicked and of Satan himself. But when a father, in order to better warn his child against the dangers which await him in the world, describes to him the impious and profane maxims which he will hear there, is not this description the word of the father?

what this Word teaches us as to the restoration of Israel, does not mean a national restoration of this people in their land, with their temple, their worship, then what does it mean? What doctrine is there which might not be disposed of by such a system of interpretation? If the presence of the Lord on the Mount of Olives, with all His saints, be but a myth designed to present to us in a manner obvious to the senses the judgment of the nations by the Lord and the establishment of His spiritual kingdom, then what will we say to those who, pursuing this system of interpretation, and taking a step further, apply it to the resurrection and ascension of the Lord, saying that these are also myths intended to teach us the durability and the heavenly character of the doctrine and the work of Christ? Thus the Word disappears bit by bit, to give place to the thoughts and imaginations of man; and with it the true Christ, He who came in the name of the Father, to give place to him who comes in His own name.

Every one knows, in spite of the mystery in which it delights to envelop itself, that freemasonry is, from a religious point of view, only a deism which changes God into the image of man, rather than man into the image of God. Yet till now profession has been made of acknowledging in God the Creator, the Architect of the

universe. To-day the newspapers tell us that the French lodges have just erased from their Catechism the name of God. Is not this also a sign of the times?

But Antichrist is not only he who denies the Father and the Son, he is also, we have seen, "the man of the earth." Just as he puts man in the place of God, so does he put earth in the place of heaven. They, then, are animated by his spirit who set their affections on the earth and on the things of the earth, those whose first and great preoccupation is to amass its wealth, to establish themselves in it in such a manner as to be able to enjoy at their ease all its pleasures. If we find these features with some of those who profess to belong to Jesus Christ, what can we, alas! say of them, but that they are in *word* the disciples of Christ, the man of heaven, and in *fact* the disciples of Antichrist, the man of the earth? For that which truly marks the disciple of Christ is to be crucified to the world, by the cross of his Master, and to be raised with Him, in order to live by His life. Beyond that, there is only vain appearance, without reality.

And that spirit of independence which is to-day to be remarked in children toward their parents, in servants toward their masters, in inferiors toward their superiors, that spirit which is lauded and reduced to system in the

emancipation of woman, what is it but the spirit of Antichrist who is preparing men to make themselves independent of God by now making them independent of those to whom God has made them subject?

Ah! yes, the spirit of Antichrist asserts itself now on all sides. We must then be on our guard.

V

In the affairs of this world it is said that the end must always be considered. Is not this equally true in the things of God? and the more so that in this case the end is eternity, an eternity of happiness or of misery. The difficulty only lies in giving ourselves a true idea of the end of each thing. Well, just on this account has prophecy been given. It shows us, in its solemn pictures of the future, the fruit reaching its full maturity of the principles which are now germinating and developing in the world.

Thus, Antichrist with his diabolical seductions, his blasphemies against God and His saints, the race of whom he seeks to exterminate; the terrible judgments which in the end fall on him and all who have followed him—all this is but the final result, the last word, if we may so speak, of the unbelief, the materialism which to-day reigns in

the world, and of that pride which brings man to desire to make himself independent of God.

Now, if the prophetic Word gives us, in the pictures which it traces of Antichrist and of his terrible end, the last word as to the loose and antichristian principles which move in our midst, it is that we may now observe these principles, and keep ourselves from all fellowship in heart and conduct with that which will soon fall under the judgment of the Lord.

Nor is the meeting of the glorified saints with their Lord in heaven other than the final result, the last word of the union established here below by the Holy Spirit between the Lord Jesus and all those who believe in Him. It is this union itself, brought to perfection and consummated in glory. Who, indeed, are those who will hear, from the depth of their tombs, or in their yet living bodies, the voice of command of the Lord, but those who here below have heard in the heart the appeals of His grace, and have responded to them? Who are those who, raised and changed by the mighty voice of the Lord, will follow Him into His heaven, but those who, obeying the voice of His Spirit, are renewed and transformed in their understanding, their affections, and their life, and follow Him by faith here below?

Thus, the rapture of the raised and changed

saints is but the full realisation in glory of that Word of the Lord, which here below is fulfilled in grace in every believer, "My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me." Whosoever here below has heard in his heart the voice of the Good Shepherd calling His sheep out of the world, and has by faith followed Him, shall also hear His glorious and almighty voice, when He comes to gather His flock together, to conduct it into the heavenly fold, and shall follow Him in the clouds. Whosoever remains deaf to the voice of the Lord calling sinners to repentance and faith, shall also remain deaf to the voice of the Archangel and to the sound of the trumpet, gathering together the family of God for heaven. Such will awake only to be judged at the end according to his works by Him, "from whose face the earth and the heaven flee away" (Rev. xx, 11).

Oh! that these great truths were received by faith! That men understood that it is now that the way to the judgment is taken, that is, of damnation or of heavenly glory, the way of life or the way of death! That, in a word, men understood that the life of faith is eternal life begun here below! What a mighty appeal would there be to the unconverted to be converted, to the undecided to decide, and to us, believers, to watch and to study, to abide in communion with

the Lord, that we may not be ashamed at His coming ! And, at the same time, what a source of consolation and encouragement when we are cast down !

The psalmist records how his feet were almost gone and his steps had well nigh slipped when he saw the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of God's people. Who is there of us who can say that he has never known nor ever will know such a temptation ? But what did the man of God do to restore the faith and hope which were for a moment shaken ? He went into the sanctuary of God, and there he considered the end of all things, the end of the righteous and of the wicked. Then he acknowledged that his heart was embittered, and that when he murmured he was a fool, as a beast before God. "Surely," says he, "Thou didst set them in slippery places, Thou castedst them down into destruction. They are brought into desolation in a moment. . . . But I am continually with Thee. Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory" (Ps. lxxiii).

Well, let us also go into the sanctuary of God, let us feed on the prophetic Scriptures, which, in the scenes, now comforting, now terrible, which they cause to pass before our eyes, show us the

end of the different paths which men follow here below, the end of the righteous and of the wicked. Let us also by faith look, not at the things which are seen which are temporal, but at the things which are not seen which are eternal. Then shall we understand that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us who have believed and endured to the end. If, a moment cast down, we have allowed the pilgrim's staff to fall from our hands, we will take it up again, repeating, though it may be with tears in our eyes:—

“And when at Thy feet, the wilderness past,
Thy Church in glory appears,
We will sing of the grace that guided us on,
Through conflict, sorrow, and tears.”

APPENDIX A

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FOR the sake of those who are surprised to find us expecting the revival of the Roman empire, we will here give in a few words the principal reasons which induce us to look for its re-establishment.

The first, which would of itself decide the question, is that the Roman empire was destroyed more than fourteen centuries ago by the sword of the barbarians, without ever having been, in any manner whatever, a confederation of ten kingdoms ; and yet the Scripture cannot be broken. This empire must then reappear in this last form, in order to the fulfilment of the Scripture. Some have sought, it is true, to see these ten kings of the end and their kingdoms in those very peoples by whom the Roman empire was overthrown, and in the modern states which owe to them their origin ; but, in the first place, these kings have not risen from the very bosom of the Roman empire, as is positively said of the kings of the end (Dan. vii, 24), and as already appears from the figure of the ten toes of the image which are on its feet, and from the ten horns of the beast which spring out of its head. These kings, on the contrary, come from afar

to fall upon the Roman empire, and to divide its spoils.

Then, again, these peoples who for fourteen centuries have done nothing but fight with one another, but dismember and rearrange the different states, have they formed, or do they form to-day, a Roman empire composed of ten confederate kingdoms of which we ourselves form part?

We can only say that to speak thus is to cast ridicule upon history and prophecy—upon history, for it is to remake it at pleasure to suit a system, instead of receiving its most positive and most certain data;—upon prophecy, for, if before the fulfilment, it often presents great difficulties, the fulfilment itself comes to resolve and explain them, witness the prophecies already fulfilled which relate to the Lord Jesus, to Israel, to the Gentile monarchies, &c. When the time has arrived for the revival of the Roman empire there will not be a poor woman, not a school boy or girl who will not know that they are in the Roman empire revived and formed of a confederation of ten kingdoms, as to-day there is no one who is ignorant that in Switzerland we are a federal republic composed of twenty-two cantons, and that Germany is a confederation of different states under the supreme rule of the king of Prussia.

But the revival of the Roman empire is not only a necessity for him who believes in the literal fulfilment of prophecy, it is also foretold and even described in Scripture. As the prophet in Babylon had seen the four beasts or the four Gentile

monarchies come up from the great sea, so does the Patmos prophet see rise up from the sea a beast with seven heads and ten horns. This last feature already reminds us of the fourth beast of Daniel with his ten horns or ten kings. The beast of John has seven heads, because it has already passed through six forms of Government, under the last of which, the imperial form, it has been wounded to death. It is now in its seventh form, that of a confederation of ten kings. The seven heads may also be the seven kings who remain after the little horn has struck down three, and who have part in this one's blasphemies. This beast retains somewhat of the first three beasts of Daniel; it has the mouth of a lion, the feet of a bear, the body of a leopard, doubtless because it will include that which remains of the empires represented by the former beasts; perhaps, also, because in it will be united their different characteristics, the uncontrolled authority of the despot of Babylon who kept alive whom he would, and slew whom he would; the terrible power of the Medo-Persian bear who crushed and trod under foot his enemies; the rapid movement of the Macedonian leopard who with prodigious leaps fell upon his prey and tore it in pieces before it had time to collect itself. The beast has been wounded to death in one of its heads, the sixth or imperial head, as we have seen, but this deadly wound is healed. Can the resurrection of the Roman empire be signified in a better way? It is so by the name of "the beast that was, and is not, and yet is (Rev.

xvii, 8). This marvellous resurrection makes all the world wonder, so that it goes after the beast, and they worship the beast whose deadly wound has been healed. They worship also the dragon who gave to the beast his power. If we notice how much effort the nations now give themselves to arrive at a form of government which brings them guarantees of strength, stability, and independence; if especially we observe that these guarantees are sought in alliances and confederations, we shall without difficulty understand their enthusiasm when they have succeeded in re-erecting the strongest and most glorious empire of which history speaks, under a form grander even than of those which have preceded, that of a confederation of ten kingdoms, with all the prestige of modern civilisation. While the saints have always said, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord," these will say, "Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?" And they will worship the beast who has been healed of his deadly wound, and they will worship the dragon who has given to the beast his power.

We shall, perhaps, be accused of contradiction, because, after having called the fourth monarchy of Daniel *the beast*, we use the same term to designate *the little horn* or the *Antichrist*, but we follow Scripture in so doing. Thus, in Rev. xiii, 1, the *beast* is indeed the Roman empire revived, and in verse 5 "there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies." Now, this is exactly what is said of the little horn of Dan. vii.

In Rev. xiii it is said that it is given to the *beast* (fourth empire) "to make war with the saints and to overcome them;" and Daniel says of the little horn "that the saints shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (vii, 25), which refers evidently to the same thing. In Rev. xiii men worship the dragon which gave power unto the beast, and they worship the beast whose deadly wound has been healed, and immediately afterwards the *beast*, bearing no other designation, is worshipped by "all that dwell upon the earth, whose names are not written in the book of life of the slain Lamb." Paul also teaches us that it is Antichrist who, "as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thess. ii, 4).

Thus, in Scripture, even, we find identification of the fourth beast, the Roman empire, with the little horn or Antichrist; and this may be understood, since this little horn, after having destroyed three of the ten horns which are upon the head of the Roman beast, rules over the seven which abandon to him their power and authority. It becomes then the head and representative of this monarchy.

This follows also from Rev. xix, 19, &c., where we have, "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army. But the beast is taken and with him the false prophet, and both are cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, &c." These kings gathered together to make war with Him who sits upon the

horse are clearly the ten kings, for it is said of them in Rev. xvii, 14, "these shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." But if the beast signify the fourth empire, there would be here a useless repetition, and one devoid of sense, since the fourth empire and the ten kings are the same thing. The beast here then must represent not the fourth empire or the confederated ten kings, but the Antichrist who, at this time, has become its chief and its representative. Besides, how can we admit that this beast which is cast alive into the bottomless pit, with the false prophet, is an empire or a confederation of the kingdoms? But if this beast is Antichrist, then nothing is more natural, since it has been, with its associate the false prophet, the great agent of the last revolt.

These considerations, joined to many others which would take too much space to detail here, have led us to modify our way of regarding the Antichrist. We were before disposed to unite in one head the features of the Antichrist and the false prophet, making of them one single person, alongside of whom we had the head of the last empire, a person whose part was limited to cause himself to be worshipped in his image. Now, however, we see in Antichrist and the false prophet two persons very distinct, and in return we see Antichrist in the head of the last empire. This seems to us more simple, more suitable in explaining and reconciling the different passages of Scripture which refer to this subject; and, above all, more in conformity with the earlier

empires whose heads have always been blasphemers and persecutors, that is to say, the true antichrists of their times.

APPENDIX B

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When Israel had rejected her Messiah, she was herself rejected by God, who said to her, "Thou art not my people, and I am not thy God (Hos. i, 10), and then called the Church. To this rejection of Israel, whose place the Church takes, corresponds the interval of more than eighteen centuries, already run, between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks of Daniel. The Church complete and taken to heaven, Israel re-enters the land by means of Divine dealing. God turns again toward His people, first to judge and punish them, then afterwards to bless them with all the blessings foretold by the prophets. This is the subject of the seventieth week. But let us enter a little more upon this interesting subject, following Dan. ix, 26, 27, "And after threescore and two weeks (added to the first seven, thus making sixty-nine) shall Messiah be cut off." This has, by common consent, been accomplished, whether we read "but not for Himself," or as in the margin, "and shall have nothing." Christ was, indeed, not cut off for Himself, for "He was wounded for our transgres-

sions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii, 5). It is also true that He was cut off and had nothing, for Israel whom He came first to seek is not converted. He could say by the mouth of the prophet, "And now saith the Lord that formed Me from the womb to be His servant, to bring Jacob again to Him, though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength" (Isa. xlix, 5). Dan. ix, 26 continues, "And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." The people of the prince that shall come, that is to say, the Antichrist, are evidently the Roman people who, under the leadership of Titus, destroyed the city of Jerusalem and the sanctuary, and put an end to the Jewish state by overwhelming desolations almost unparalleled in history; but this destruction of Jerusalem took place forty years after the death of the Lord. Now, if the Spirit of prophecy had not desired to put an interval between the sixty-ninth and the seventieth week, would it not be strange, and more than strange, that immediately after having spoken of the death of the Lord He should bring us beyond the cycle of the seventy weeks, causing us to pass beyond the seventieth week by thirty-three years, in order to lead us back again into it? But what follows proves that such was not His intention,

“and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.” What war? if not that of Israel against her God, which will not terminate until, at the end, she turns to Jehovah her God and to David her king. Thus, these words conduct us, as by the hand, to the end of the dispensation, far indeed from the cycle of seventy weeks. So is it in verse 27, “And He shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week, and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and by the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that which is determined shall be poured upon the desolator.”

“And He shall confirm a covenant with the many for one week.” Those who would make the seventieth week follow immediately after the sixty-ninth say that this was fulfilled in the conversion of the three thousand and the five thousand who believed after Pentecost. And by separating these words from those which precede and those which follow them, we could indeed give them such a meaning; but then what does the following signify? “and in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”? In the midst of the week which followed the death of the Lord, that is, three years and a half after that death, there was no cessation of the sacrifice and oblation of Jewish ritual. This ritual had virtually ceased when Jesus said upon the cross, “It is finished,” and the veil of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom. It only ceased, as a

fact forty years later, when Jerusalem was taken by the Romans, and the temple destroyed; but three years and a half after the death of the Lord there was no kind of realisation whatever of these words foretelling the cessation of the sacrifice and oblation, and above all by means of a prince that shall come. The week in question here cannot then be the week which followed the death of the Lord, it is the week yet to come at the end of the age. It is the week of the prince that shall come, or the Antichrist, as the words which follow prove, "the overspreading of abominations, &c." We have already seen that the "abomination of desolation" can absolutely be understood only of the image of the Antichrist. This image, placed in the temple, is a cause of desolation, since all who refuse to worship it are put to death. But for the elect's sake, said the Lord, those days shall be shortened. The rendering which many prefer of the last clause of the verse "shall be poured upon the desolator," though opposed to the ordinary version, yet leaves untouched all the facts of which we have been speaking. The desolation, after having been poured out during the latter half-week upon the faithful of Israel, the desolated, will, in the last hour of this week, be poured out upon the desolator, Antichrist, when the Lord appears. We are thus led to that which the Word gives us as the final result of the seventy weeks, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and

to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy place." If the seventieth week follow immediately the sixty-ninth, all these things were fulfilled seven years at the most after the death of the Saviour. But, is this the case?

For the members of the Church, doubtless, whether among Jews or Gentiles, some at least of these things have been fulfilled; thus, their transgression has been finished, their sin come to an end, and reconciliation has been made for their iniquity, but has this been fulfilled for Israel as a nation? In no wise, for God still says to her, "Thou art not my people, and I am not thy God." Only when she "looks on Him whom she has pierced, will there be opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem a fountain for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. xii, 10; xiii, 1). Now, is it not evident that the seventy weeks concern Israel and Jerusalem? "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city." We Gentiles are not the people of Daniel, and our cities are not his holy city. But in Israel, which is alone regarded in this prophecy, it has not yet been fulfilled, her transgression has not been finished, an end not made of her sins. When a little faithful remnant shall have passed through that last and terrible tribulation, and shall have been purified and made white, then only will it be said, "Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of

the Lord's hand double for all her sins" (Isaiah xl, 2).

When the Son of David, the righteous Branch, after having destroyed the wicked one and those who destroy the earth with him, "shall reign as King and prosper, and execute judgment and justice in the earth" (Jer. xxiii, 5), then, under the sceptre of the true Melchisedec, shall be "brought in everlasting righteousness." Then, also, the prophecies which, so far as they concern Israel, remain still three parts unfulfilled, shall have their accomplishment, for those will be "the times of restitution of all things spoken by the prophets" (Acts iii, 21). Thus "the vision and the prophecy will be sealed up." Then at last the holy place, purified from the abominations with which it had been defiled in the days of Antichrist, shall be anointed with the glory of God, as the tabernacle had been in the wilderness and the temple at Jerusalem in the days of Solomon. Is it not to this that this word of Isaiah iv, 4—6, in some respects mysterious, relates :

"When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night, for upon all the glory shall be a defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a

place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and rain."

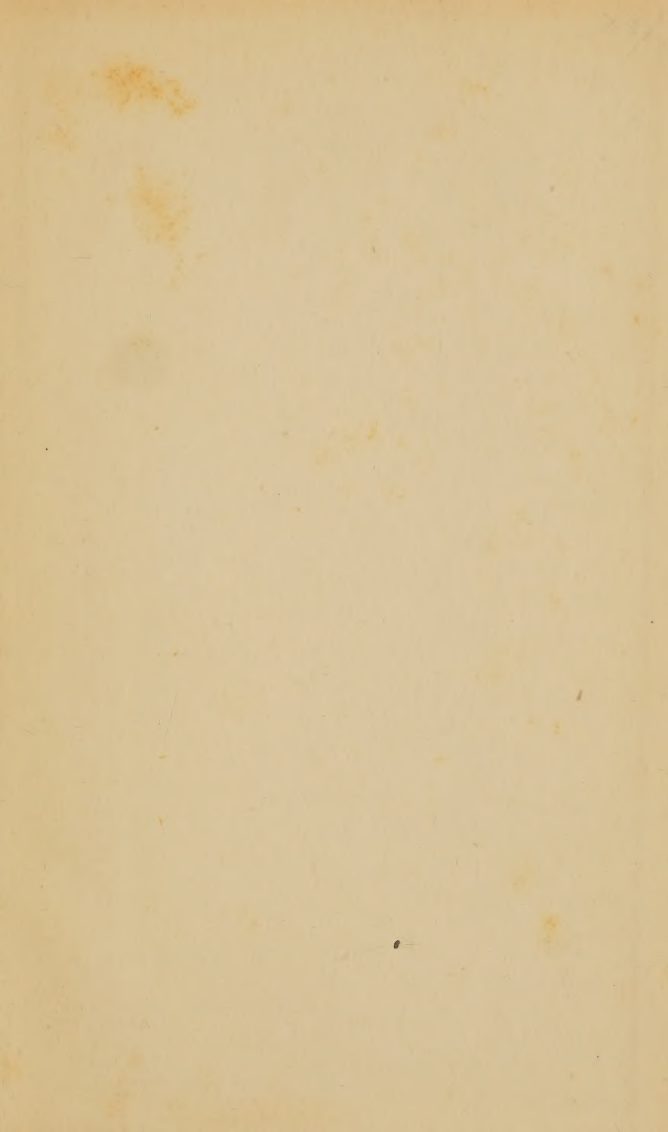
We thus conclude that what the Word presents to us as the final result of the seventy weeks of years has not yet been accomplished. To seek this accomplishment in the Church is to put one's self in direct opposition to the Word of the Lord, "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city." We ask again, are our cities the holy city of Daniel? are our people his people? Daniel in his prayer had in view only deliverance from Babylon and the restoration of Jerusalem. God answers the thought of His servant; only in what He says of his people and his holy city he passes much beyond the range of his sight and of his hopes. After having shown him the deliverance from the captivity in seven weeks of years, and the rebuilding of the street and of the wall in troublous times, He shows him also Christ rejected, then, as a punishment for this rejection, the city and the sanctuary again destroyed, and desolations determined upon this rebellious people until the end of its war against God, that is to say, until wickedness, carried to its height under the Antichrist, leads at last to his destruction by the Lord and the coming of His glorious kingdom.

In other words, indeed, we conclude that between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week must be placed the period of the Church. Such an interruption of the natural order of the weeks is not, as might seem at first sight, the result of a strained interpretation intended to support, at all cost, a pre-arranged

system; it is not in contradiction to the general tone of Scripture teaching upon this point. On the contrary, this interruption is in complete accord with this teaching, it is a divine harmony worthy in every way of the Word in which it is found. In fact, as, since Israel rejected her Christ and King, God has not acknowledged her as His people, is it not natural that weeks and years should cease to be counted by Him in the calendar of the people of God; in other words, that her history, as God's people, should be broken off? This is the time, always indefinite, of the "many days during which the children of Israel shall abide without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim" (Hos. iii, 4). This is the time spoken of by the Lord, when He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate! For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii, 37—39). But, as the compassions of God cannot remain inactive, as even they find occasion from the sin of man to display themselves with greater splendour, God, during the time of Israel's rejection, calls out the Church, which thus fills the place left by Israel in the history of the divine dispensations. Then at last, when the Church has been gathered into the heavenly mansions, and Israel is again assembled in

her land, re-establishing her temple and worship, God renews His relations with her; He takes knowledge of her, first to judge and then to bless her. Thus does the history of this people begin again in the book of God. The seventieth week might in a manner be called the conclusion of Israel's history in the present age and the preface to her history in the age which is to come.





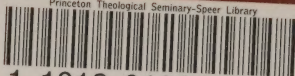
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